WISP

A GIRL OF DUBLIN

KATHARINE ADAMS

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A GIRL OF DUBLIN

By KATHARINE ADAMS

Mehitable
Midsummer: A Story for Boys and Girls
Wisp—A Girl of Dublin

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WISP

A GIRL OF DUBLIN

BY

KATHARINE ADAMS
AUTHOR OF "MEHITABLE," "MIDSUMMER," ETC.

Illustrated by
JAY VAN EVEREN

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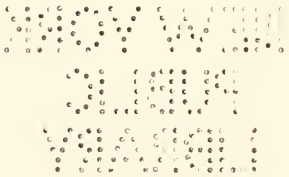

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WISP—A GIRL OF DUBLIN

I.—In the Green

"You needn't try to comfort me, Chrissie, for you simply can't do it. Please let me alone!"

"Beryl, people are watching us. Do stop crying and let's go over to the duck pond! I've a chunk of bread left and the ducks always make you laugh, especially the old grandfather one that is so greedy and fights the others. He will cheer you up!"

"He couldn't to-day! That's all we do—just feed the ducks, have lessons, and walk in the green. Any one would think we were eight instead of fifteen!" A sob choked the last words, and Beryl

Langsley covered her face with her arm, her long braids of brown hair falling about her shoulders. Her sister looked at her helplessly and then off at the winter stillness of St. Stephen's Green in Dublin, off to where the mild sunshine made the winding duck pond a frail silver curve through the gray, leafless trees. Laughter came from the edge of the pond where a group of ragged children were having a contest as to who could throw their bit of bread the farthest.

"Here's Miss Peck. She's coming along by the upper path and she sees you're crying." Christine Langsley patted her sister's arm vigorously. A short woman with nearsighted eyes and sandy hair, dressed in a brown frieze suit and a shabby little hat, came up to them.

"Dear, dear, Beryl, what is the matter?" she asked with real concern. Beryl was feeling about for her handkerchief, and, not finding it, accepted the one that Christine shoved into her hand, and before she could reply Miss Peck exclaimed again:

"Surely, Beryl, you haven't lost the pretty blue handkerchief that came to you in one of your letters from girl friends in America, this morning? I saw you put it in your pocket when we started out!" ejaculated Miss Peck.

"She's dropped it somewhere. I'll go and look for it," suggested Christine.

"That's a good girl, Chrissie! It might be down by the pond. But what is the matter with your

sister?" The question, though addressed to Christine, was intended for them both.

"She's homesick, Miss Peck. She says we're missing all the fun. The letters from home this morning told of all they're doing."

"All who are doing?" put in Miss Peck.

Beryl gave her eyes a last vigorous rub with her sister's handkerchief and looked up at the governess. "You can't understand," she said. "There is no use in trying to explain, for you simply cannot understand." Beryl spoke earnestly, a half sob in her voice.

"You see, Miss Peck, two years seems such a long time. Father told us it would be two years before he's ready to go back, and we're missing such a lot," explained Christine.

"All our home friends will be growing up. We missed all the fun at camp last summer. Oh, you haven't any idea what that means, Miss Peck. I just can't explain. I'm sorry I've been so foolish and I know you can't understand, Pecky dear. You don't know anything about our real life. You've just seen us here in Dublin doing lessons and taking walks in the green."

Miss Peck looked a little helplessly from one to the other of the two girls. The situation seemed for the moment beyond her. Then suddenly she smiled, and when she spoke it was in a different tone from any they had ever heard her use, and what she said was: "I have a secret!"

Beryl shrugged her shoulders. She was sure that Miss Peck's secret would be a stupid one. Christine showed only faint interest. "A real secret?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Miss Peck slowly, "one that seems overpowering."

Beryl put the handkerchief in her pocket. Something in Miss Peck's tone caught her imagination. "Well, if it really is overpowering I'd like to hear it. I'll tell you, Pecky dear, what we'll do. Let's go over to the D. B. C. and buy some crumpets and toast them for tea over our fire. Then you can tell the secret! Isn't that a good idea?" She looked at Christine and at Miss Peck and they could both see that she had brightened considerably. She was given to sudden ideas, and this one seemed to her especially nice, the secret making it more than an ordinary occasion.

Miss Peck agreed to the plan, but they first began a search for the lost handkerchief, each taking one of the paths where they had been walking about for the past hour. It was growing late and the park was deserted except for the children by the pond and a group farther away, nearer the entrance gate. Christine came upon them around a curve of the winding gravel, and before she saw them she heard their voices, for they were singing and the song sounded very sweet through the hazy twilight air. Christine stood watching them for a few minutes without their seeing her. They were danc-

ing, or at any rate Christine supposed that was what they were trying to do, though only one of them was really doing it. She was the smallest of them all and she was evidently the leader.

Suddenly she turned and spoke to a stout girl at the end of the line. "You're too heavy on your feet, Peggy Casey. Fairies ain't like that! Step up and out this way!" As she spoke she floated, or so it seemed, along the path. She was so very thin, and she moved so lightly, that it seemed as though she might blow away with the leaves that danced along the path. No one followed her, and Peg Casey called out to her:

"We ain't goin' to play fairies any more today!"

The thin girl walked back to them slowly, and, as she did so, she saw Christine who stood watching her. Then an instant later she spied something blue that was caught in the twisted branch of a bush. Quick as a flash she sprang forward and caught it, holding it in both hands and gazing at it in admiration.

"Look at this, will ye! Ain't it the sweet, wee thing? Shure, it might be the handkerchief o' a fairy."

The others came up to her and she held out the dainty blue object with tiny pink rosebuds embroidered in the corners. Then Christine stepped up to the group.

"I'm sorry," she said, looking from one to the

other of the group and smiling. "That's my sister's handkerchief, and it came in a letter from America this morning. I've just been looking for it."

The very thin girl in the slimsy gray dress held out the handkerchief to her at once.

"I'm glad I found it for ye, miss. Your sister must be a-breakin' of her heart over the losin' of it," she said.

Christine took the handkerchief with a "Thank you," and then she added impulsively, "If it belonged to me I'd love to have you keep it since you like it so much!"

A little color crept into the girl's face and she smiled at Christine, but a shyness had come over her and for a moment she did not answer. Then she asked, "Did you come from America, too?"

Christine nodded. "Yes, it's our home, and today especially we've been so homesick. Our father has left us here with a governess—he's gone to Salonica. It's pretty hard for us, just staying here. It's so dull!"

Christine never knew why she said all this to the shabby, thin little girl. Perhaps it was because of the grayness of the afternoon, the long dreary day; perhaps it was just the friendliness in the girl's eyes. She was odd looking, there was no doubt of that, silhouetted as she was against the winter brown of the bushes. In her dull frayed dress and flapping old jacket, she might have been a part of the spirit-

less bleak afternoon, a frail sprite of the leafless brush and trees, had it not been that she fairly sparkled with life and motion, with joy and buoyancy. She had very wide-open blue eyes and ragged gold-red hair. Her hair had evidently been cut with a pair of rusty shears which gave it a jagged, uneven appearance.

She had listened breathlessly while Christine spoke to her, and the last word seemed to astonish her. "Dull," she repeated after Christine. "You after sayin' you ain't happy here in Ireland, miss? You think it's dull. Why, that seems odd enough." She stood looking at Christine, not in a rude, staring sort of way but with pity, for she saw that Christine's eyes were full of tears. She felt very sorry for her, but she did not know how to tell her so. She had never spoken to a girl like Christine before and she felt all at once interested and shy and excited. "Don't you feel bad, miss, maybe you'll like it better when the spring comes," she said to Christine.

"Do you like it?" asked Christine. She thought afterwards that it was a silly question to have asked. The strange girl looked at her in a puzzled sort of way, then she turned toward the others who had come up close to her and were staring at Christine as hard as they could stare. The stout girl had a nice rosy face and a warmer jacket than the thin one, but her stockings were full of holes and sagged down over her very muddy shoes. A boy of about three

years old clung to her skirts and a pale-faced one with a red nose and watery eyes took her arm and tried to pull her along.

"Let's go, Peg. It's a long way to granny's," he whimpered.

"Come along, Kathleen, the cop's near on us. It's closin' time," urged the stout girl named Peg to the girl with the red-gold hair.

Kathleen came quite close to Christine and touched her arm. "Be happy, please, miss. Oh, how can you think that Ireland's dull?" she said.

"Don't you think these gray days when it rains so much are dull? But of course you have your friends." Christine looked off at the rest of the little group as she spoke. Just then she heard a voice calling her and she knew that it was Beryl's. "That's my sister calling. I'm glad I've seen you." She held out her hand as she spoke, and the thin girl took it and smiled delightedly. The others of the group had wandered on a little way toward the entrance gate and for a moment the two girls stood there on the gray, wind-swept path alone.

"Don't you know how to pretend, just think of things and make up the tales? That's rare fun if you do be lonesome like, miss," the strange girl said to her.

Just then Beryl came running down the path and like a flash Christine's new acquaintance ran on to join her friends. "Where on earth are you, Christine? I've called and called! What have you been

doing?" Beryl was a little out of temper, for it was late and she wanted her tea.

"I found the handkerchief, or rather such an odd girl found it. I've just been talking to her." Christine handed the handkerchief to Beryl, and they both stood waiting for Miss Peck, who was coming rapidly toward them down the path.

"Come, I'm sure it's very late. The policeman is telling those children to leave. I see you have the handkerchief, Beryl," exclaimed Miss Peck all in one breath as she settled her hat, which the wind had blown to one side.

They walked on toward the gate, and Christine told her about the finding of the handkerchief. They were passing the children as she told about it and she smiled at the small gray-clad figure of the girl with whom she had just been speaking.

"The very thin girl with the red hair found it, Miss Peck, such a nice girl. I'd like to have her tell me things. I mean—oh, well, I can't explain!" Christine often began sentences and ended them this way, and both Miss Peck and Beryl were used to it.

Miss Peck glanced at the little group as they passed by, and so did Beryl and Christine, the latter smiling and nodding. The governess sighed. It distressed her to see the scantily clad, unkempt-looking group. "They live in Cuff Street or one of the lanes near by, I dare say," she said as they went out the great entrance gate. "It is a sad sight and

they are forlorn little souls," she added as they stood on the corner waiting to cross the street.

They found themselves in the midst of a whirl of noise and bustle—newsboys, flower girls, beggars, and general confusion. They had to wait for quite a while on the corner while some heavy motor lorries filled with soldiers went by. Christine took Miss Peck's arm, but Beryl stood very straight and independent, and it was she who knew the exact moment when it was safe for them to cross.

When they were on the other side of the street, making their way toward the bakery, Beryl stopped for a moment, gazing after the lorries. "Just think, the war's been going on for a year and a half. Oh, I do think I'm a selfish girl to mind any little trouble of my own." She said this half to herself and half to the others, but they were entering the bakery door by that time and did not answer her.

They bought the crumpets and some little currant cakes which Miss Peck assured them were very different from those one used to have before the war. Both Beryl and Christine were interested in the war bread and cake, and though they had each of them a sweet tooth they did try to "save sugar," and they had been several times to one of the refugee places to take sweets for Belgian children. It was new and strange and confusing, this war that seemed to be all around them, though it did not really touch them closely, living as they did so quiet a life with their governess.

A little while later they were toasting the crumpets over a hot fire in their own sitting room. Miss Peck sat close to the fire knitting a khaki-colored helmet and the two girls knelt in the warm glow, busy with their crumpets. When Beryl pronounced them just the right shade of golden brown Christine held a large blue plate while Beryl slid them off the toaster. The woman who kept the house where they had lodgings had brought up the tea tray and as soon as the crumpets were ready Miss Peck poured the tea.

Miss Peck could not quite see what particular pleasure there could be in roasting one's self in front of a hot fire, bending over until one's back must be nearly broken, but Miss Peck could not understand a good many things. As she sat there with her knitting she felt that perhaps the girls were right in saying that she could not understand them. Well, she had some news for them.

She had been engaged for them by their Uncle James in London, and had met them at the boat when they had arrived from America with their father, and had gone with them to the station to see him off when he had started for a special mission to Salonica, and then she had brought them over to Ireland because that had been their father's wish. He felt that it was safer for them than remaining in England, because of the air raids, and also there was some property belonging to the family in Dublin. His mother had been Irish and he had spent some

of his time there as a child. His English relatives had thought him exceedingly foolish in bringing his children to England, considering the times in which they were living, but he expected to be away for several years—who knew how long?—and in case of anything happening to him in the war he felt it best that the girls should be near their own flesh and blood. His brother James would always look out for them, and he wanted them to know something of this part of the world. They themselves had not wanted to come. They were very fond of what they called their own country, America, having lived there since they were three, and all their interests and friends were there. Except for seeing the cousins! That, they had always wanted and had dreamed about.

Christine sat down on a stool near the fire and Beryl stood with her cup in her hand, a crumpet balanced perilously on the edge of the saucer. Suddenly she sighed lustily.

"Goodness, Beryl, what is it now?" laughed Christine.

"Oh, I was just thinking of the disappointment!" her sister answered. "Yes," assented Christine a little sadly. They always spoke about the cousins that way.

Miss Peck knitted very briskly for a moment.

"When you think how we've always longed to see them and thought and thought about it," Beryl went on.

"And imagined about it," put in Christine.

"Then to reach London in a pea-soup fog and find that they were not coming. We knew, of course, that they'd be in school, and father doesn't approve of boarding schools, so we wouldn't have seen a great deal of them; but still— Oh, Miss Peck, don't you suppose we can at least have a glimpse of Keith during his summer holidays as long as he's the only one in England?"

Miss Peck laid her knitting in her lap and looked first at Beryl and then at Christine, and almost together the two girls cried out: "The secret. Tell it right away!"

Miss Peck only said: "I think, after all, I will have a currant cake and just a little more tea— that's it, Christine dear, that's quite enough." She drank some of the tea and ate half a currant cake slowly. It was very aggravating of her, but as Beryl whispered to Christine when she filled her cup: "It's probable that we're going to the pantomime or some stupid, childish thing."

Finally Miss Peck wiped her hands on a very large, immaculate linen handkerchief, and when she spoke there was rather a nervous quaver in her voice. "You don't know how many sleepless nights I've had, girls, since the letter came!"

"The letter! What letter?" asked Beryl. She sat down suddenly on a rather plump red velvet covered chair under a cold-looking picture of the battle of Waterloo, and her tea splashed over on to

her saucer and down on to the skirt of her blue serge jumper dress.

Miss Peck said, "Oh, Beryl," but even she did not suggest for the moment that the skirt be wiped off. She was excited. She had lived such a quiet life for so long in the vicarage of a tiny English village with her old father, and now it seemed as though all sorts of new things were crowding into her life, all kinds of responsibilities.

"What if I should tell you," she said, looking first at one and then at the other, "what if I should tell you that they are coming back, after all? Your cousins sailed from India to-day!"

Then Beryl burst out with: "Pecky, what are you trying to tell us? What do you mean? First you speak of a letter, and then—Oh, I can't believe it;—you say our cousins are coming home to England!"

Miss Peck shook her head, smiling. "They are not coming to England, except, that is, of course, to land from the P. O. steamer. They are coming here to Ireland and they are going to live with us!"

There was a moment's silence and then Beryl whirled around and around and, catching Christine about the waist, she danced her up and down. When they stopped, breathless, they both came up to Miss Peck and stood looking down at her. The color was high in their cheeks and they breathed quickly.

"Oh, Pecky, tell us all about it."

"Christine, which one do you want to see most?" Beryl looked eagerly at her sister as she spoke.

"Joan, I think," answered Christine. "She's nearest my age; though, of course, there is Keith. Which one do you want to see the most?" she asked in turn.

"Oh, Victoria, of course," exclaimed Beryl, and then she turned again to the governess. "Are they all to come?" she asked her.

"All except Keith, and he will spend his holidays with us. It seems the youngest child, Patrick, isn't strong and they say that Victoria cannot stand the climate. Your Uncle Sylvester wrote me from India begging me to take them all, and your father and uncles have been corresponding about it. We shall live in that old house of your Uncle James's on Fitzwilliam Square. It has been empty for a long time."

At this last bit of information Beryl and Christine could only look at each other in speechless delight. An old empty house filled with big, gloomy rooms! Could anything be more delightful? All of them together there. It seemed incredible!

Beryl began to speak quite indignantly: "We should have been told before. What is this idea of treating us like babies? Why didn't Uncle Sylvester write us, too, and why didn't Uncle James write from London if we're going to live in his house?" Beryl was so excited that her cheeks were positively crimson. She had all sorts of questions to ask and began to ply Miss Peck with them right away. Christine went over to the window and stood there, look-

ing out. She was as excited in her own way as Beryl, but she wanted to think about it all for a few minutes. Some way she had felt differently, even before Miss Peck had told them the wonderful news. She had been happier ever since she had seen the little thin girl playing a fairy game in St. Stephen's Green. She couldn't explain it even to herself, but suddenly it seemed to her that if they only knew how to find it, Ireland might be for them a sort of enchanting fairy place. It was just themselves that had made it seem dull. Christine clasped her hands together and stood looking out at the soft gray twilight. Just beyond them was the green, darkly gray against the faint primrose of the sky. The cousins were coming; that was splendid. She was very, very glad, but there was something else she wanted. It was to have the little gray girl for a friend. She had been thinking of it on the walk home from the bakery and all the time they were having tea. It had seemed more important than Miss Peck's secret.

Beryl's voice called her: "Come here, Christine. Come over to the fire. We've so much to talk over."

Christine came slowly across the room and sat down again on the stool by the fire. Beryl threw herself down on the floor beside her. "Why did you go over there by the window when there are so many dandy things to talk about? Miss Peck says we can go over to the house with her to-morrow

and plan who shall have which room, and, oh, all sorts of things. Isn't it going to be fun?"

Christine nodded delightedly; then she hesitated an instant before she spoke. "All of us together in the big house there on Fitzwilliam Square—yes, it's all going to be so different from anything we've ever done—everything is going to be different—and I want to love it here. I want to know the girl I was talking to in the green!"

Beryl laughed, giving Christine a little hug. "Isn't she dear and quaint, Miss Peck? Doesn't she say funny things?"

Miss Peck smiled indulgently. "Why should you want to make the acquaintance of the poor little Cuff Street child? She was just a little wisp of a thing," she said.

"That's it," exclaimed Christine. "Oh, I do want to see the cousins and I'm excited about their coming; but, well, I can't say why, but I do want to know the Cuff Street girl. That's the name for her, Miss Peck—you've said it—Wisp!"

II.—Wisp

"Make up your mind quick what ye want to do Peg. The wind blows into me bones. Are ye goin' to take Tin and Dawson to yer granny's or are ye comin' with me?"

"Let's not go to granny's, Peg. Let's go to Fairy Cottage." The red-nosed boy hesitated over the last words as though they had come to him as an afterthought, and Wisp gave him a quick, radiant smile. Never mind if her real name was Kathleen Magillicully; to us she will be forever and forever Wisp.

"That's it," she said approvingly. "Dawson remembered the name. I'm goin' to give a prize at

the end of this month to the one who says it the oftenest!"

"What's the prize goin' to be?" queried the boy, grabbing the baby's short skirt and dragging him away from the passing throngs.

"Oh, I dunno, I ain't decided."

The four of them, including the baby, stood a little to one side of a crowded corner just outside the green. People jostled them, but they managed somehow to keep the baby from being trampled on and to carry on a conversation among themselves.

Peggy was hungry, and she knew that at her grandmother's down on Amiens Street there would probably be fried herrings for supper, but there would not be any fun. She stood wavering. First she thought of Wisp's "Fairy Cottage" and how they would all squeeze in, even baby, and even if there was very little to eat there would be plans and stories and a good time.

"What have ye for supper?" she asked.

Wisp thought for a minute.

"There's a quarter of a tin o' cocoa and water's free—that means cocoa all around. There's an orange. Tin can have half and we'll divide the rest. There's two ha'penny buns and a half box o' broken biscuits they gave me at Jacobs."

"Mother left a bit o' cheese for my lunch but we didn't go back for it. I sold two bunches o' flowers for Mag Tooley and bought something for the three of us. We'll git the cheese. It'll help out!" said

Peg, still not quite certain but wavering towards the "Fairy Cottage."

"Cheese is fine. Will ye come, then?" Wisp buttoned the collar of her shabby coat at the throat as she spoke. It was the only button on the coat, and the rest of the garment flapped about her in a wing-like sort of way.

"Yes, we'll come." This from Peg.

"Good enough. We'll make a feast of it. Come, then, I'll carry Tin across the street. He's safer with me!" So saying, Wisp picked up Tin, who put his chubby arms tight around her neck. She turned her face around and admonished him. "Hold on tight and don't you dare wave your hand to the policeman or I can't hold ye!" He gave a squeal for answer. The four at a sudden clearing started over. Halfway across the policeman greeted them familiarly.

"For once ye waited like civilized human beings. It's ginerally ye scramble right under the motor cars." As he spoke he lifted Tin out of Wisp's arms and carried him across the rest of the way to the sidewalk, putting him back in Wisp's arms. The four started on up the far side of the green toward where they would turn off in their home direction, Cuff Street.

Tin was heavy and Wisp was just about to hand him over to his sister Peg when he lurched forward, a very disconcerting way he had of doing; she stumbled a little, and they both fell into the arms of

a very stout woman in a thick gray coat. She was carrying a number of bundles and one of them fell to the ground. Then all was confusion. Dawson leaned over and picked up the bundles, and Wisp, handing the baby over to Peg, looked up beseechingly at the red, flustered face of the woman. "Oh, ma'am, it's me own fault, not Tinney's. I go dreamin' along, ma'am. That's what they always says about me." Wisp's bright hair blew about her earnest upturned face as she spoke so apologetically. The woman smiled and did not seem in the least angry. She examined the packages and discovered that one was whole, but that the other, quite a good-sized apple tart, hot from the big bakery oven, was broken in large, crummy pieces.

"There, there, child, never mind," she said as she peered into the paper containing the tart. "I know you didn't mean to do it," she went on, looking at Wisp and then at Tin in Peg's arms.

"That child's too heavy for you," she said, turning to Wisp. Then her glance swept the four of them in swift, kindly fashion. "You can have the tart, children. You won't mind it's being broken, I know that well," she exclaimed, and then, before they could do more than call out, "Oh, thank you, ma'am," she had handed Wisp the paper-wrapped tart and with one last backward glance, her good-natured, ruddy face vanished in the crowd.

They hurried on, almost miraculously escaping knocking other people's bundles out of their hands.

At last they turned their corner and half a block's walk brought them to a dark, cavernous opening in a dingy wall. They stopped while Peg put Tin down on the doorstep and stretched her arms.

"Ain't it a dream—the pie? Ain't it wonderful? We do have a great life! There's always something happenin'!" exclaimed Wisp, and she was so delighted that she leaned over and kissed the top of Tin's forehead. He made a grab at her and said, "Play horse!"

Wisp shook her head. "We've three flights o' stairs to git you up. That's enough," she said, shaking her head at him.

"I'll go for the cheese," exclaimed Peg. "I'll not be but a minute." She ran on through a narrow courtyard, returning almost at once with something in a torn piece of brown paper. Peg's mother had rooms off the court.

They stopped a moment at the foot of a dim flight of rickety wooden stairs. "I'll carry Tin the first flight," volunteered Wisp.

"I'll take him up the next and Dawson can take him the last of all," suggested Peg. This was agreed upon and they started, Wisp carrying the baby.

"I walk," remarked Tin, but they knew that was out of the question, for the flights were steep, so high that he could not have mounted one step alone. Wisp had to stop every few steps, and halfway up they all rested for a while. Then on again to a gusty landing where through half open doors came the sound of loud laughter and rough voices. Then the second flight; Peg puffing at every step; another dank, dusty landing; voices again; the last flight reached at last.

Dawson did his share nobly, but his legs were so short it was difficult to tell whether he was carrying Tin, or vice versa. At last they reached the top of the last flight and Wisp raised her finger warningly.

"Not a word out of yez or we'll have the Kinsale twins on us. I'll get the tea-kettle!"

With this she tiptoed over to a ladder leaning against the wall at a far end of the hall, mounted it, disappeared behind a blue calico curtain and in a moment was back again, kettle in hand. It was a rusty kettle and it had no cover, but it was an important possession to Wisp.

"You go on up and I'll wait for the kettle to boil," she said to Peg. Then she ran on down the stairs.

"She's gone to Auntie Moneypenny's to ask for room on her stove. I don't blame her for wantin' to keep away from the Kinsales, livin' with 'em so long as she did. A whole tribe o' kids yellin' all the time, and Mrs. Kinsale ready with her stick!" commented Peg as they went over to the ladder and she hoisted Tin on to the first rung.

Now began the last stage of their journey: the climb up the ladder. Dawson went ahead, Peg boosted from behind, and soon the three of them were safe on the other side of the blue calico curtain. Where did they go and what was Wisp's Fairy Cottage? It was like this: A year before there had been an attempt to put fire escapes on the tenement. It had been a difficult task and had been given up. While investigating the men had built a shaft up near the boards at the far end of the hall. It was made of boards and was the shape of a small box-like room, very small, but still a room. This is what Wisp called her Fairy Cottage.

After the men had gone she went up the ladder, her arms full of her belongings: a pillow, half a rag rug, the blue curtain, three books, the tea-kettle, a cracked dish or two, and a few other treasures. This is where she lived. Mrs. Kinsale, with whom she had stayed since she was a baby, did not care. She had eight children of her own.

Fairy Cottage, that was what she wanted her

friends to call it, and only her special chums ever saw it. The tenement children were curious about it, but they were in awe of Wisp. Only a few were asked inside the blue curtain. Tin and Dawson knew the place well for as brother and cousin they belonged to Peg, and she was Wisp's dearest friend.

In a short time their hostess was with them, appearing with the kettle and at once setting about making the cocoa. Peg spread a newspaper in the center and they all sat about it, close together. There were three cups, though one had no handle and the others were chipped. They gave the orange to Tin, as they had the tart. The broken biscuits and bits of cheese were ranged along beside the ha'penny buns.

Wisp's friend, Foggy Moyne, who lived below, and who drove a butcher cart, had nailed up a board for her which she used as a shelf. She kept her dishes on it, the three books, some neatly cut sheets of brown paper sewed together which she called her journal, and a few pieces of clothing. In the wall was cut a square hole and the sharp, sweet evening air blew in on them. It was a window. This same friend Foggy had cut it for her so that she could see the sky. No one but Wisp herself knew how she loved the sky. She reached up for an old black shawl and wrapped it about Tin, fastening it, in spite of his protestations, with a safety pin, but leaving his arms free.

"There's more cocoa," she commented, peering

into the kettle. "You haven't had your share, Dawson. Hand up your cup!" She poured the rest of the drab-looking mixture into the cup without a handle, which he held out to her by one edge.

"Did ye mind them girls in the green, Peg—them as stood lookin' at us?"

"I did. One of them was after talkin' with ye. What did she say?"

"She was sad like, and she'd been cryin'. Her eyes was red. What could the likes of her find to cry about, Peg?"

"I dunno. She had bad news, maybe."

Wisp shook her head. "No, she hadn't! She was dull. Ain't that odd like? She says to me, it's all gray and rainy here." Wisp sat thinking, her head tipped sideways, the glory of her hair falling about her face. She had been thinking all the way home about the girl with the yellow braids who had spoken with her there in the green; the girl with the gentle face, the first one of her kind with whom Wisp had ever spoken. Some one who could have told her so much; she who knew so little.

"Maybe you cheered her a bit. She was after smilin' and she looked back at ye after she went along," suggested Peg cheerfully.

This was indeed a new idea, that she, Wisp, could have cheered up the charming stranger girl. How silly to think of it! Why, she wore such dainty clothes and she was so different—so different. Wisp smiled delightedly at Peg and cut her a very large

slice of apple tart. It was fun anyway to think about it, and she was glad the girl had turned back and looked at her.

At the end of the meal Peg leaned over and whispered to Wisp. "Have ye anything planned up for us to do to-night?" Wisp shook her head.

"I'll just be stayin' in," she answered. Peg had whispered because she did not want Dawson to go out with them.

The party broke up, Peg and Dawson climbing slowly down the ladder, Tin between them. "It's been grand. I'll be back maybe after a bit if ma comes home soon," Peg called up from below.

"Come along," Wisp called back. When she was alone she put the dishes in a little pile, ready to take down later to wash at Auntie Moneypenny's, a little old woman whom next to Peg and her friend Foggy she loved most of all. Then she wrapped the black shawl about her. It was one that Auntie Moneypenny had given her, and going over to the square hole in the wall, she knelt, looking off. Faint gray, then a film of something. "A cloud," she whispered to herself. Then a glitter of silver blue. "Stars," she breathed, pushing the hair out of her eyes. Blue-gray again and a frail glitter of something white which she did not know was called the Milky Way, but which brought a smile to her face.

Suddenly something big and gold and splendid, something that made her close her eyes. It was the moon.

III.—The House in the Square

Clang!

"Knock again, Beryl. Perhaps she is deaf." As she spoke, Miss Peck peered at the formidable door of Uncle James's house on Fitzwilliam Square, as though she thought she could see through it. Beryl lifted the old griffin's head knocker and let it go again. Clang! They listened, but did not hear a sound. The three stood looking at the neat door-plate above the knocker which was inscribed with the words, James Mortimer Langsley, Esq.

It was a raw day, a week since the crumpet toasting and the secret.

"I feel sure I won't like her. Mink—what a name!" exclaimed Beryl, rubbing one foot against

the other to warm it. "She's kept us waiting for the key a whole week; she might at least let us in, now she's come."

"Listen, don't you hear something?" put in Miss Peck.

There was a faint sound of creaking steps. "In another moment the door will open and we'll see what she's like," whispered Christine, and her sister answered with a little giggle.

"Well, you needn't whisper. She couldn't hear through this door. Who cares anyway, what she's like? I don't."

The words were hardly spoken before the door was opened and a short, stout woman with a wrinkled face stood looking out at them. She wore a black and white checked dress and a white ruffled dust cap.

"Well," she asked a little fretfully, "what is it that you want?"

After an instant she realized who they must be and before Miss Peck could speak she exclaimed:

"The young ladies and Miss Peck!"

The governess nodded smilingly. "Yes, we are here and so came to see the house." She put her hand on Christine's arm. "This is Miss Beryl," looking over her shoulder at Beryl who had stepped back as the housekeeper had opened the door. "And this is Miss Christine," giving the short, stubby yellow braids a little pat as she spoke. "We know that you must be Mrs. Mink."

The little stout woman nodded and gave a stiff little bow. "I'm sure I'm glad to see the young ladies and yourself, Miss Peck. Dear, dear, I never expected you this morning. The whole house is being cleaned from garret to cellar. Such a sight as met my eyes when I came in, tired out from being pitched about on the Irish Sea!" She raised her hands as though further words on the subject were beyond her. Then she stepped back, holding the door wide open, and they all came inside.

The hall was dark and had a damp, musty odor. A woman was scrubbing the blue and white tiled floor. Several pails of water and some rags were on the floor and a broom, propped against the wall, fell down with a bang as they came in.

"I'm sure I don't know where to ask you to sit, and indeed there's hardly room to walk about," went on little Mrs. Mink. "Take care, miss, you'll stumble over the broom." Christine caught herself just in time and Miss Peck suggested that they just take a look around upstairs.

"Everything's helter skelter up there, too, miss, but perhaps you'll not mind. I wish you had waited until to-morrow, miss, I do indeed. Such a sight as is this house!" Mrs. Mink threw up her funny little hands in despair and then called crisply to some one in the room beyond:

"Get to work and don't stand there staring!"

The person in the next room, who proved to be a round-faced girl in a print dress, holding a broom,

began to sweep energetically. Mrs. Mink turned toward Miss Peck and the girls. "You see, the whole house is in a stir-up and these new servants are sure to be idle and good-for-nothing."

Beryl walked over toward the stairway. "I'm going to look around even if everything is upset, Mrs. Mink. We've waited a week for you to come from England with the key and we don't want to wait any longer." She started to go up the stairs as she spoke and Christine followed her. "Cross, fussy old thing! I knew she was going to be like that! Fussy Bunch, that's what I'm going to call her," said Beryl as they reached the top and stood looking down into the cluttered hall.

"Don't you love the banisters?" exclaimed Christine, touching the smooth, wide surface. "Won't they be wonderful for Patrick to slide down? He must be just at the sliding age!"

"Yes," laughed Beryl as they went on down the hall. "Patrick and some one else I know who will never grow up, and adores sliding down the banisters." She linked her arm in Christine's and they went on together, into the first room on the right. It was a long, low, dark room and they saw by the book-lined walls that it was the library. There was the same musty odor about it that there had been in the hall. "It's all musty and dusty and cold," grumbled Beryl.

Christine went over to one of the windows and tried to open it. "There isn't any use in doing that.

It hasn't been open in years and years. Uncle James hasn't lived here for ages." Beryl came up to the window and looked out on to the neat, well-kept square, encircled in its iron railing. Christine pulled once more and then gave up.

"It won't budge," she said, looking ruefully at a black stain of dust on her glove. Then she suddenly gave her sister a hug. "Don't look so forlorn, Berry. Can't you see it the way it's going to look with the firelight on the books, and flowers around in bowls and vases? Just think of all the fun we're going to have! Two weeks more and we'll see them all—and Victoria—you know how you're simply dying to see Victoria!"

Beryl continued to look gloomily out of the window, and spoke as though she had not heard Christine at all. "Last year at this time we were having sleigh rides at home, oyster soup afterward." Beryl winked her eyes rapidly and Christine pulled her away from the window.

"Come on, let's look around at the bedrooms and decide where every one is to sleep."

It was a good idea, and Beryl cheered up almost at once. The bedrooms were just as dusty and forlorn as the rest of the house, but it was absorbing planning who should occupy them. "This will do for Victoria and Joan—see, there's another big room right off it for you and me. Isn't that dandy?" Beryl took a notebook from the pocket of her jacket as she spoke, and began jotting something down, and

Christine came up to her and peered over her shoulder. "I'm putting down some notes of things I want to buy. I had quite a talk with Pecky and told her that we wished to have something to say about fixing the house. She says she has no objection to my choosing some of the draperies," explained Beryl, eyeing the windows speculatively. "I ought to have a yardstick. If Mrs. Mink wasn't such a grumpy old thing I'd ask her for one."

Christine wandered off into the hall. She could picture the rooms all freshly papered with new chintz curtains at the windows, but she was not so interested in the practical details. Beryl liked to plan. She was never so happy as when she was managing something, and when Christine came running back into the bedroom she found her sister seated on a low window seat, her braids over her shoulder, writing busily in her notebook.

"I've found just the room for Patrick, exactly what a little boy would like. It's at the end of the hall and isn't very large, but it has two windows. Come and see it!"

Christine plumped herself down on the window sill beside Beryl. "Oh, how I wish the two weeks were over and it was the day of the night they were coming. Pecky says they'll probably get in on the five-thirty boat. We'll go down to Kingstown to meet them, of course," she said.

"Well, there's heaps to be done before they do come," exclaimed Beryl, jumping up all enthusiasm

as Miss Peck appeared in the doorway. "Oh, Pecky! I've all sorts of ideas."

They showed the governess the room beyond, which they wanted for the cousins, and laughed when she was shocked at the forlornness of the old four-poster bed with its tattered curtains. "Just wait until we've finished with it," boasted Beryl.

For the next few days it seemed as though they lived in the midst of measures and cretonnes. As 50 Fitzwilliam Square was still under the bombardment of the cleaning squad that was chasing away its cobwebs, the girls and Miss Peck had to do as best they could with an occasional peep in. It was fun choosing fresh wall paper for the bedrooms and the "study," an unexpectedly enormous apartment off the first half landing before one reached the top of the stairs. Mrs. Mink called it the "Return Room" and seemed to be more concerned about it than about any of the others. Miss Peck said it would be excellent for a schoolroom, and as the girls objected to the word, saying it sounded too childish, they called it the study.

Beryl was very clever at sewing and she and Miss Peck really enjoyed making the curtains, but Christine soon tired of hemming seams that were given her, and used to go off and leave the two whenever an excuse came up.

She had seen nothing of the "girl in the green," as she now thought of her. It had rained for several days after they had met that afternoon of the Secret,

and then the last days had been full of shopping and planning for the house. Christine found herself wanting to tell Wisp about all that had happened. Her name must be Wisp, it suited her so well! Christine was thinking of her particularly one afternoon when, after a phone call from Mrs. Mink, they went over to the house. At last everything was as clean as soap and water, carpet sweepers, furniture polish, and brooms and brushes could make it! Mrs. Mink had told them this triumphantly over the phone.

"She doesn't really want us to come, but I suppose she feels she must tell us that it's ready. Let's move over to-night," suggested Beryl, as they stood again on the steps, waiting to be let in. A neat parlor maid opened the door this time and said that Mrs. Mink had gone to see an old friend in Glasnevin for the afternoon. This was good news to the girls and they immediately set about to "see the house" and they did it thoroughly.

Christine whispered to Miss Peck, with a giggle, "Isn't Beryl funny? She's so glad Mrs. Mink isn't here she doesn't know what to do. I've never known her to be in awe of any one before!"

They left the governess to look about at her leisure, and began their tour of investigation. Up and down, in and out they looked and discovered and exclaimed. It was really a delightful house! There were so many unexpected corners and turns and cubby-holes! There were three back staircases

leading to different parts of the house, and they went up each one to see where it led. Two connected with the servants' rooms and proved uninteresting; but the third was more satisfactory. As they reached the top they heard an odd dripping sound and when they came to the last step they found themselves in an empty attic-like room, only dimly lighted by a low latticed window.

They stood in the center of it for a moment looking about and then Christine went over to the window and looked out. "There's a nice little view of the garden from here but the room is awful, isn't it—sort of creepy," she said, looking back over her shoulder.

"I don't know," Beryl answered slowly. "I think we might do something with it. I'll have to think about it before I say much, but I've an idea that we may find this the best room in the house. I mean the one that will mean the most to us," she spoke meditatively and a little mysteriously, and Christine only said:

"Bosh! It's too spooky. It makes me think of all the ghost stories I've ever read. I can imagine all sorts of things here—let's go downstairs."

"Wait until I tell you my plan. It doesn't need to look like this," Beryl said as they went on down the stairs. "Don't you think we may want a place quite to ourselves? This could really be very secret—see, the door leading to it looks almost like part

of the wall. We only found it because we were poking around." She shut the door after them as she spoke, and sure enough! It hardly looked like a real door at all.

"What do you mean by a place to ourselves? You don't mean a secret room that the cousins aren't to know about, do you?" asked Christine.

Beryl nodded. "Yes I do," she said firmly. "You know we may not like them, the cousins—of course we probably will—I'm sure I expect to, but in any case we'll want a place where we can be quite alone at times. I'm going to fix up the secret room and we'll never tell any one about it. You see the servants won't use the stairs, for they don't lead to anything except the empty room. I don't believe they'll ever know it's there. It's just the thing for us."

Beryl led on toward the garden and Christine followed slowly.

"You haven't chosen a very pleasant place for our secret room—of course it's interesting, but gloomy, and that drip all the time would make one 'nervy,' as Pecky says."

"It's only water from the eaves going down a pipe. Don't be a goose! Let's have a run in the garden," Beryl called back over her shoulder.

The garden was a surprise. It was long and wide and in spite of the fact that it was December there was a hint of green about it and it had something growing and spring-like about it. It was a

very charming place even on a damp winter day, and Christine as she breathed the sweet air could see it as it would be in the spring.

They ran down through winding paths, delighting in the odd little twists here and there. There was a high brick wall all along each side and a rather drab-looking little summerhouse with the moldy statue of an odd little gnome-like figure in front of it. Beryl eyed the summerhouse speculatively.

"We might make something of it. How would it be to paint it white? There are roses all around. See the bushes! I want to have garden parties next summer. Father said they used to have so many in the old days."

Miss Peck called them and they went on inside. "I want to match this bit of chintz to some sewing silk. Dear me, I wish I'd thought of it on the way here! We'll just have time to finish the curtains for your bedroom before dark," she said as they went down the steps.

"I'll go for the thread, Pecky, if you like. I want a walk," Christine suggested.

"That's a good idea," said Beryl decidedly. "We don't need the blue thread till to-morrow morning and we can go right ahead and finish the curtains before tea. You needn't hurry back for we'll be so busy we won't miss you, will we, Pecky dear?" Miss Peck looked a little anxiously at Christine. "You're sure you'll be all right?" she asked.

"Goodness yes, Pecky. I'm old enough to go

about the world alone, I should hope," Christine answered a little crossly, but she waved her hand and smiled back at them as she turned off in the other direction. She went through the green but nowhere did she see a sign of Wisp. She went on through the gate and crossing the street went on down Grafton Street. She had grown to love this narrow thoroughfare with its fascinating shops, its crowds, its life and sparkle. Everywhere there were soldiers and there was a strained look on people's faces that was not good to see. Christine did her errand, matched the silk exactly and leaving the shop hurried up Grafton Street. There were bright patches of color everywhere among the crowd; girls selling flowers. "Come little miss. Take just a wee bunch, that's a lady!" Christine heard this on each side of her and through all the clamor of the street and the voices of the girls selling flowers was a low whine: "Give a ha'penny to a poor starving man, little missy," or "God bless ye, give a copper to help a whole family wid no bread for their mouths, miss!"

Christine was used to the beggars now, and though they made her heart ache she did not have the fear of them that she had had at first. She did give a ha'penny to the old man and then hurried on as fast as she could; and as she turned the corner leading from Grafton Street she almost ran into a small figure which was standing with its face pressed against the window of a bookshop. It was Wisp.

Christine recognized her at once and went up to her and touched her arm, and she turned quickly. When she saw who it was the color rushed into her white face and she smiled radiantly.

"It's you, is it, miss!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," answered Christine. "I was so hoping I'd see you. I've thought about you so much." The two girls stood smiling at each other in the midst of the busy corner.

"I hope you're not so dull now, miss." Wisp spoke shyly.

"Oh, no, indeed! Why, I'm so excited! Such a splendid thing has happened! Our cousins are coming from India. We're all going to live together in Uncle James's house on Fitzwilliam Square." As she spoke a thought came to Christine and in her impulsive way she spoke it. "Come with me and have tea at the D.B.C.—do! I'm cold and we can have some good hot tea and really get acquainted. Please say you'll come!"

Wisp stood still in the midst of all the crowd, her hands clasped tightly together and her eyes filled with astonishment, gazing up at Christine.

"Tea," she repeated. "Tea in a real tea shop with you, miss?"

"Why, yes." Christine took her gently by the arm. "Come," she said, "let us have tea together—why shouldn't we? I want to know you better and I do believe there's nothing like a sociable cup of tea to make people acquainted."

They were almost at the tea shop door. Wisp still hesitated but suddenly she said, "I will, miss," and she followed Christine inside.

They found a table in a quiet corner and when the maid came up to them Christine ordered tea and toast. "War bread tastes better toasted," she said cheerfully after the maid had gone. Her heart beat a little with excitement. She knew that she had done an unusual thing. The maid had looked at her curiously, though she had been polite. Wisp, sitting there in the quiet tea room, looked oddly different from anything around her. Her hair seemed wilder and more jagged than ever, her face thinner and the flabby jacket more threadbare than ever, but her eyes shone like diamonds and there was about her the strange charm—perhaps the mystery of Ireland.

Christine soon forgot all except her delight in the new acquaintance. She told Wisp of the letter and the secret, then of the house, Mrs. Mink, and all that had made up her life during the last two weeks. They enjoyed the hot tea and toast and the shyness of both wore off as they sat there talking over the little meal. It was Christine who did most of the talking and it was Wisp who listened breathlessly to many things that were new to her. She saw that Christine was enjoying herself in telling it all and as for her, it was all new, all enchanting; a life of which she knew nothing: a house, a garden, a sister, cousins, chintz, four-poster beds! It was like

a fairy tale! She had read of such things. Yes, she could read—and dream!

"I've heard tell of it all in books, miss, but I never thought to hear of it first hand," she said to Christine, and Christine smiled at her beamingly and said:

"Perhaps you'll see it all some day. I've just talked on and on about myself, but Wisp—do you mind if I call you that? It seems to suit you—I've thought so much about that day in the green. You made me see Ireland differently, all of a sudden. I've wanted you to tell me things. Have you a mother, Wisp?"

Wisp shook her head. "No, miss, I was after livin' with a party called Kinsale, but I left her. She beat me."

Christine was silent for a moment and before she spoke again Wisp said, "I've good friends, miss. Old Auntie Moneypenny, she do be grand as gold to me, and Foggy Moyne who drives a butcher cart, and Peg." Wisp smiled reassuringly at Christine who was looking troubled.

The maid came up then and Christine paid the bill. Then the two girls went out together into the dusky afternoon. Wisp held out her hands a little timidly and Christine took them in both her own.

"Thank you, miss," she said simply.

Christine held the two hands in both her own for a moment and looked earnestly at Wisp.

"We'll be friends, won't we! Tell me," she

went on, "do you live now with the kind old woman you spoke about?"

Wisp shook her head. Some of her old assurance came back to her.

"No, miss, I live alone. I've a wee place of me own," she answered her.

IV.—On the Barge

"I'm sorry the new cook's cousin died and she has to stay for the funeral. I mean I'm sorry for her as well as for ourselves, but, Mrs. Mink, we simply must move over to-day. We've planned it for a week. We can make a picnic of it and we'll not mind a bit, but we simply must come!" Beryl spoke determinedly, but the housekeeper did not seem in the least impressed and replied calmly.

"Things must be done with law and order, miss. We can't run the house properly until the cook comes. You'll have to have a bit more patience for

a few days, but it's something you don't know very much about, patience, if you don't mind my saying so, miss!"

Beryl glared at Mrs. Mink and the latter returned the look placidly. A dozen angry words rushed to Beryl's lips but she said nothing for a moment. She was very disappointed and indignant and she had never met any one like Mrs. Mink before. There was something so immovable and exasperating about her. The cousins were coming in a few days, the chintz curtains were finished and hung, and the house was cleaned, but because of the cook's cousin's sudden demise, they had to stay on in the tiresome rooms for a couple of days longer. She turned away without a word, walking down the steps of the Fitzwilliam Square house, and Mrs. Mink shut the door behind her quietly.

A butcher cart drove up with a clatter in front of the house just as she reached the sidewalk and a boy called out to the fat little horse he was driving, "Hi, stop, Jumbles! You're too merry of a mornin'!" If he had not said the word "Jumbles," Beryl would not have noticed him at all, but as it was she looked up and smiled unwillingly. She had not thought of speaking but he had such a very round, red and smiling countenance, such round brown eyes with so jolly a twinkle in them that before she knew it she exclaimed, "What a funny name for a horse!"

"Yes, miss, and he's a funny horse. He's like me, miss, full o' ginger. That's why I call him Jumbles."

He threw back his head and laughed and then jumped down off his high seat, and with some packages under his arm, disappeared down the walk leading to the "Tradesman's Entrance." He whistled as he went and it was quite a rollicking air. What a round face! What a funny boy! She was cheered in spite of herself.

Beryl folded her rose wool dressing gown and put it in the tray of her trunk, shut the lid, locked it, and going over to the table, put the key in her purse. It was after lunch and they were packing in their room. "I'll not be ordered about and told what I can do or not do by Mrs. Mink or any one else. We could go over to-night if you and Pecky had any backbone, but you're afraid of her!"

Christine sat on the edge of her bed, running ribbons in her nightgown. She nodded, smiling.

"We're all in awe of her and it's much more interesting than having her a sort of wishy-washy person. We can think of her as a sort of queer little ogress who tries to spoil all our plans and fun," she said as she went over to her trunk with the nightgown in her hand.

"You're really a perfect baby, Christine. Pretend she's an ogress! Goodness, will you never grow up! I can't realize you're only a year younger than I!" Miss Peck called from the next room and Beryl went on out, leaving her sister trying in vain to shut down the cover of her trunk.

"Oh, I'll leave it. I'm tired of fussing with

things," she thought, and she took up her jacket from the back of a chair, put on her blue felt hat with the gray feather, felt in her pocket and found her brown leather gloves were there, and called back as she opened the door, "I'm going out!" Some one called back, "All right!"

Christine went on out into the sunshine. As she walked toward the green she drew in long breaths of the sweet air. She was so glad to be away from trunks and fussing and delays! She, too, was tired of their lodgings and was only too anxious to be finally settled in the odd old house, but unlike Beryl, there was so much beyond it, about which she wondered, much that she wanted to know and see and feel.

The stout girl was in the green and the pale boy and the baby were with her, but not Wisp. The three were walking along by the pond. Every now and then the three-year-old would make a dash toward the pond and either the stout girl or the boy would dash after him. She had a nice face, Christine decided, as she walked slowly by them. Some one was coming toward them; some one who seemed to fly, so fast did she run down the path from the gate. It was Wisp, and there was no doubt that she had something to say. She stood breathless for an instant after she reached the little group, but in an incredibly short time she burst out with, "It's to-day! Foggy says be ready at three. His friend on the barge has promised! Oh, ain't it grand?"

The next instant she saw Christine and her face became even more illumined.

"Good-day to ye, miss."

She was interrupted by eager voices. "Tell us more, Kathleen. When were ye after hearin' of it?" They came close to her and Tin, the baby, pulled at her skirt. Christine stood close beside them.

"It do be Foggy's afternoon off, seein' he helped extra that week when Mr. Keefy had the influenza. Foggy, he went down to the quay as soon as he was let off and there was his friend, old Tuffy, and he says as how he would be a goin' up the river wid a load and for Foggy to bring us along!"

"What are you going to do? Won't you tell me about it?" asked Christine. The others stared at her, but she did not mind and Wisp smiled eagerly, coming close to her and repeating her story.

"It's my friend Foggy, who drives a butcher cart, miss. He's the rest of the day off and an old man he knows on one of the Guinness barges that go up the river is after sayin' we can all go along, miss." As she spoke the thought came to Wisp, a thought she dared not put in words. The little young lady—but of course she would never dream of such a thing, would never, never go! A sail up the river even on a barge—it seemed so odd. These children—to go with them, could she, or rather would she? This was Christine's thought and so both girls stood there in the sunshine, neither wanting to put into words what they were thinking.

Peg broke the moment's silence. "Shouldn't we be after goin', Kathleen?"

Wisp nodded. "Straight away. There's no time to lose for Tuffy wants to start at three." She hesitated and finally, the color rushing to her face, she turned, speaking softly to Christine so that the others could not hear. "You'd niver think o' comin' on wid the likes of us, would you, miss? There's the river and the sun is shinin'. We'd be glad o' your company, miss, but maybe it wouldn't do for ye?"

Christine found herself saying, "I'd love to come. I've never been on a barge. Are you sure there's room for me?"

"A barge is big, miss. There's room a plenty," Wisp answered her.

"I'll come then if you'll take me," Christine said, and the others heard her and looked at her in round-eyed amazement. Then the little group started out of the green.

It was a little strange walking down Grafton Street with them. Some people turned and looked curiously at them, the young girl in the dark well-fitting serge suit and the soft blue hat, neatly gloved and with dainty blue ribbon bows each side of her face; the thin, shabby, gaunt-looking girl walking beside her, with gold-red hair flying in the wind, and behind them an untidy, blowsy-headed girl and two ill-kept children.

Peg called to Wisp. "Wouldn't there be time

just to red up a bit? I could be wearin' of my red tammy."

Wisp spoke over her shoulder. "There ain't time. We'll have to go along just as we be."

Peg braided her hair as she walked. She felt vaguely uncomfortable. Why had she not worn her new cloth gloves? She looked down at Tinny. His face was clean, for she had scrubbed it well before they started out, and he had on the brown coat made over from one of Georgie Kinsale's. Mrs. Kinsale had bought it at the Iveagh market in Francis Street and had finally handed it over to Peg's mother for Tin. A high wind had stolen his cap away one day and they hadn't seen their way as yet to buy him another, so they tied anything that came handy about his head, and to-day it happened to be a piece of sacking!

"Why had Kathleen invited the young lady?" thought poor Peg uneasily. "It was really too bad of her!"

They reached the end of Grafton Street, finding themselves in front of the great gray main building of Trinity College. In front of them was a whirling mass of people, motors and motor-lorries, outside cars and a little of everything all mixed up together, and beyond the solid gloomy magnificence of the Bank of Ireland, with red-coated soldier sentries keeping guard.

They kept on toward the quay. It was not easy to talk, there was so much noise and such a crowd.

It was splendid to be in the midst of it all, Christine thought. This was the life of the city, the heart of it, and what she was about to do would also be a part of it!

Wisp was not happy as she walked with Christine toward the quay. It would not last. It was only a passing shadow. Was she not going to have a dream come true, a sail on a barge up the Liffey? She could forget the shadow soon, but it seemed to walk beside her all the way to the quay. Peg was uncomfortable because of Christine, but Wisp was suffering. Why, oh why had she spent the twopence she had earned Saturday for a bit of red cheese cloth with which to make a new cushion for her pillow? She should instead have gone to the Iveagh market Saturday night and bought two buttons for her jacket. How it flew about her in the wind! Her shoes! She had been so glad of the thick piece of gray twine Foggy had brought her from the butcher shop. It had done good service, had kept her shoes tightly together after the last button had gone. She glanced at Christine's neatly shod feet and she swallowed a lump in her throat, and she clenched her hands in the pockets of her jacket: small, hard, red hands, clean as cold water and floor-scrubbing soap could make them! Wisp saw suddenly and sharply a great difference between herself and Christine, and because she was so young she could not see that it really and truly did not matter very much.

They crossed the street, reaching the other side in safety, and then Christine turned to Wisp speaking happily. "Isn't it going to be fun? I've never been on a barge and I think it was so dear of you to ask me!"

Wisp cheered up suddenly. They were off, a whole party of them, on a holiday; adventure and excitement lay before them!

Tin gave one of his sudden shrieks, pointing to a window full of cakes. "Good cakies!" he exclaimed. That was an idea! They were right in front of Bewley's Cake Shop. Christine opened her purse and looked inside. There she saw a shilling and a sixpence, two pennies, a safety pin, some stamps and a small sample of blue chintz.

"I'll buy some goodies and we'll eat them on the barge. Don't you want to come in and choose what you would like?" she asked them, but they would not follow her, so she went inside alone. She chose buns, nice, brown shiny ones, thinking them better than the war cake which had no icing. She came out with a big bag full. Tin stretched out his plump hands and gave an appealing squeal so she handed him a nice spicy one, the others preferring to wait until they reached the barge, though they looked with interest at Tin as he devoured his.

They turned to their left as they reached the river and had to walk a little way down to where the barge lay close to shore, the smoke from its funnel giving warning of a speedy departure. A round-faced boy

was waiting for them on the bank. It was Wisp's friend, Foggy Moyne, the small boy that had called out to the horse "Jumbles" in front of 50 Fitzwilliam Square. His eyes grew rounder than ever when he saw Christine. He had seen some one in blue serge that looked like her that very morning!

Wisp gave the introduction. "It's Miss Christine. This is me friend Foggy." Foggy took off his cap and displayed a head of short dark curls. He smiled and the smile made deep dimples in his round red cheeks. "Good-day, miss, and welcome to ye." He picked up Tin, setting him on his shoulder. "Not a word out of ye now or maybe we won't be let to go at all at all," he admonished the youngest of the party who understood what he said and was as quiet as a mouse when they went up the slippery, muddy gangplank on to the old brown barge.

"Ye're to come on to the far end. There's a bit o' canvas nailed over a corner and ye must all sit there quiet like till we're well along. Nobody but old Tuffy knows we're goin'. He ain't got all the say and if we're noisy he maybe'd get into some trouble." Foggy spoke seriously but the next minute grinned from ear to ear, looking from one to the other of them and giving Tin's head a soft pat. He had often been on the barge and had told Wisp and Peg about it, but it was a real holiday, having them come also.

It was rather uncertain walking. The barge was slimy and there were papers scattered about. Be-

fore they reached the canvas there was a slow movenent under their feet. They had started on their way!

"Keep nice and quiet till we come out from under the first bridge," warned Foggy. "When once we're fairly off they'll not mind us!" The girls and Tin sat on a clean piece of sacking under the canvas and Foggy and Dawson on an old box.

Straight under O'Connell Bridge they glided and then on slowly up the river, leaving the city behind them though all along each side of them were black wharfs, dingy shops, boats at anchor near shore, not fine pleasure crafts, just battered dories or barges. There were flashes of brilliant blue in the sky. It was one of the almost summer days that come sometimes to Ireland in December.

For a few minutes Christine felt ill at ease, thinking that the others would have enjoyed it all the better if she had not come with them. Tin suddenly crawled across the others and settled himself comfortably on her lap. "Ain't ye bold then, Tin? The young lady don't want ye!" reproached Peg.

Christine put her arm around Tin and smiled across at Peg. "Yes, I do want him. I think he's dear," she said. She gave the bag of buns to Foggy. "We found these at Bewley's on the way here. Don't you want to pass them around?" she suggested.

The ice was broken from then on and they were soon talking busily, enjoying the brown spicy buns and the sun-filled air. On one side of them was the

dingy outline of narrow old streets leading down to the quays and on the other the dense blur of a wood.

"Over yonder's the park. The Zoo is in it," piped up Dawson unexpectedly. Christine nodded.

"We've been there, and when the cousins come (I'm expecting cousins all the way from India) we're going to take an outside car and drive all through Phœnix Park," she said.

"Sometime I'm goin' to the Faery Glen at midnight, all alone!" Wisp stood up as she spoke and going over to a coil of ropes sat down on them, facing the others, and looking beyond them to the dark etching of trees against the sky. In the far quiet corner where they sat, the barge men did not notice them except to call a good-natured word now and then.

Foggy took a large bite from a bun and then smiled across at Christine.

"Maybe this year we'll get to Kilmaslogue," Wisp said, clasping her hands about her knees.

"Oh, maybe," sighed Peg. "I'm tired o' wantin' to go and never gettin' there."

The barge was to go some way up the river to take on some merchandise which had been sidetracked and so they found themselves very shortly gliding along with green gray meadows stretching each side of them, real country all about them. They were in reality only a little way from the city, but they might have been a thousand miles away.

"Ain't it grand?" sighed Wisp, and the others except Christine and Tin answered, "Ain't it!"

Very soon a gray little village came to view, very dismal and cluttered.

"It do be Chapelizoid," said Foggy, and suddenly Christine exclaimed, "I know; why, that's it. That's the village where Tristram and Isolde were." She looked across at the dingy little place. "Isn't it strange," she breathed—"Tristram and Isolde—there!"

Wisp leaned toward her eagerly. "What is it, tell me please?" she asked her.

"Sometime I will if you like, but now wouldn't you tell me a story?" she answered.

"Ah, Kathleen, do," begged the others. Wisp shook her head.

The barge had stopped and there was the heavy noise of dragging and pulling and shouting at the far end of the barge.

"I said I'd tell no more stories till ye had better marks at school," she said severely.

"She means her own school," explained Foggy. "She has a class at Jeffers Court, miss. She do give the children lessons."

Wisp colored modestly as Christine looked at her. " 'Tain't much, miss. I git on well at the regular school, and I helps the others a bit what don't like schoolin' so much. I'll be after leavin' school altogether in the spring, for I'm to sell flowers then for

me livin'," she answered, and as she spoke a shadow touched her face.

She did not tell a story, but on the way back as they went slowly by the gray green meadows, as the water grew dark from the deepening twilight and the sun faded, she told them some of her thoughts, and because a gift had been given her, perhaps—who knows?—by the very fairies that she loved, they listened to her, all of them, drawing near.

"I ain't goin' to tell a story now. It's too grand just to be a sailin' along, quiet like this way, but I do feel the fairies close to-day. Up there beyond the village and here where the water's so deep and dark and where the fields are so sort o' listenin' and dim and odd like—I know them fairies is near. Why they don't have to be just in woods or hills—Kilmaslogue as we was a speaking of is a fairy hill, miss," she turned to Christine as she spoke. Fairies is in the water, too—all along in the sedge, and way down deep in the sea. I likes to fancy 'em a swimmin' up to the city. I think they come swimmin' late at night and then they shake the water off their silver wings and fly."

"Where?" piped Dawson excitedly.

"Everywhere—Jeffers Court and wherever there's children. Saint Michael, he dropped 'em down from heaven and there's as many o' 'em in the ocean and the lakes as there be in the woods and fields. They're in ponds, too, and fountains." She sat looking

dreamily off at the fast approaching dusky city, as she answered him.

Christine shook herself and stood up very stiffly when they anchored one side of O'Connell Bridge. It had been like a dream. She said good-by to the others gratefully, but a little hurriedly. It was later than she had expected and she jumped into a tram and out again at the street near their rooms. What would Miss Peck say! She found the governess and Beryl at the window looking out when she came in.

"Wherever have you been!" exclaimed Miss Peck a little sharply.

Christine was just about to say, "On a barge up the river," when Beryl began to speak excitedly.

"Oh, I suppose you've been shopping and having tea all by yourself as you so like to do. You missed Mrs. Witheringhaugh's visit. She's a friend of Uncle James and she's going to invite us to her home to see her niece in the holidays!"

V.—"Over There is India"

The cook arrived at 50 Fitzwilliam Square one morning and they went over to stay that same afternoon. Life was suddenly delightful and the girls were in high spirits. Even Miss Peck was quite content as they sat by the fire in the study, after a well cooked meal in the stiff, handsome, immaculate dining room. There might be storms ahead, at any rate grave responsibilities, but there in the quiet firelight that first evening in the old house, all was for the moment harmonious.

Beryl sat on a low stool close to the fire, her elbows on her knees and her face buried in her hands. Christine was curled up on the old green velvet covered sofa near her.

"We ought to have a cat," Christine remarked

unexpectedly, and Miss Peck said, "Oh, dear, must we? Well, I daresay there are plenty about here," and went on counting stitches. "Knit two, purl two," she murmured to herself.

Beryl did not think Christine's remark worthy of an answer. She was deep in thought. They would all be here in four days. There would be five of them in the house, five cousins, all strangers to each other, and on Christmas Eve Keith was coming. He and Victoria were twins. They had always known that about them. They had had fairly recent photographs of the others, but there was only an odd, stubby little one of Keith when he was four. He was at Eton now. She supposed that he was different from the boys she knew at home.

"Oh, I'm so tired of wondering what they're like," she burst out suddenly.

"I am too, and I'm tired of waiting. The next four days will be simply endless. I'll go out and look for a cat the first thing to-morrow. That will be something to do until they come," answered Christine.

"You're such a child, Christine. You seem to grow younger instead of older all the time."

Beryl looked meditatively at Christine as she spoke and then they burst out laughing in spite of themselves. They were in the state of mind when laughing came easily. "You talk like a grandmother yourself, Berry. What is this sudden idea of being so grown up? I'm sure I'm in no hurry. Goodness,

let's enjoy ourselves and not worry about it!" Christine threw a pillow at Beryl as she spoke and that young person returned in kind.

"You might both be five for the moment," commented Miss Peck. She sighed softly, but they did not hear her. She felt herself as though she had never been really young and she heartily echoed Christine's words in her own mind. Let them enjoy themselves and not worry about growing up!

"I suppose we'll all seem strange to each other. Don't you think they'll be ever so different from us? They've lived for years in India and they're very English, too. They won't know anything about the things we care about."

"Oh, well, it will be fun to tell them things and hear them talk. We must plan something splendid for Christmas Eve. I know what I'd like to do," said Christine.

"What?" asked Beryl.

"All of us go from house to house singing carols; it would be like the old Irish days—they do it still, but I like to think of the very long ago days when they used to sing them," said Christine, thinking of Wisp and the barge.

"No, I don't think that would be the thing. We don't know if they can sing. It's the night that Keith is coming from school, don't you remember?"

Christine was silent. She was thinking of "the others," as she called them—Wisp and Peg and Foggy and even Tin and Dawson. She was think-

ing of the afternoon on the Liffey—the smoke, the sun, and the enchantment. What if she should say suddenly to Miss Peck and Beryl, "I went up the river on a barge with Cuff Street children the other afternoon. It was very muddy and slippery and smoky, but we had a perfectly delightful time!" She smiled to herself, but she did not tell them, and at the governess's next words she forgot for the moment all about them.

"Your Uncle James is giving you a box at the pantomime Christmas Eve."

Beryl sat upright full of interest. "That's so, the pantomime begins next week. We've never seen one, but I guess it must be like comic opera, isn't it, Pecky?" she asked.

"I don't know," the governess replied. "We have very little opportunity for musical comedy in the country and I seldom went to Birmingham, the nearest town to us. Let me see, the last musical comedy I saw was 'The Cingalee' and that must have been a dozen years ago. I've not been to a pantomime for a long time, either. I shall enjoy it!"

Christine sprang up suddenly and putting her arms around Miss Peck, kissed her. "You're such a dear, Pecky," she exclaimed, then she added, looking across at Beryl, "I don't believe the pantomimes they have over here are really like comic operas. I hope not. I think they are ever so much more charming and fairy-like. What a jolly thing it will be, all of us at a box party at the pantomime!"

They talked it over that night in bed, for they were far too excited to go to sleep at once. The room looked very cosy in spite of its size. There was a coal fire, the firearms and andirons were polished until they fairly sparkled. In front of the fire was a black bear rug that they had found in the attic and that Lizzie, the housemaid, had brushed and beaten until it looked like new. Their curtains were roses on a dull blue background, instead of all rose like those in Victoria's and Joan's room. It was all new and interesting and pleasant.

"I'll tell you one thing, Christine, we need some new clothes." Beryl spoke emphatically, sitting up in bed and rebraiding a plait of her hair which had come undone. "Our suits are new and the blue serges, but the white dresses are so uninteresting. We must each have a new evening dress."

"Evening dress," repeated Christine with a giggle. "Will you please tell me where we would wear them?"

"Don't be stupid! You don't know all we may do this winter. Mrs. Witheringhaugh is going to ask us there, and Uncle James wrote that he was going to 'Acquaint some of his friends of our residence in Fitzwilliam Square.' Isn't he quaint?" Beryl laughed as she spoke and so did Christine. They had met their Uncle James in London and thought him a solemn stiff sort of person. "It's good of him to give us the box party for the pantomime, but I do hope he won't come over himself to join us. Uncle James

at the pantomime! How funny!" They both laughed at this. Beryl took her gold wrist watch from under the pillow and looked at it.

"It's after twelve and as we've simply heaps of things to do to-morrow we ought to go to sleep. I'll speak to Pecky about our dresses to-morrow. It's war time and no one needs very much, but we should each of us have a lovely dress for evening."

Christine smiled to herself as she answered sleepily, "All right."

She knew Beryl so well and was sure that Miss Peck's mention of the pantomime party had set her sister off to planning dresses for them each to wear. "Keith comes that night and she wants to make a good impression. She's always so wanted to see him," she thought as she drifted off into the land of dreams.

The next few days whirled by. There was so much to do, last touches to the rooms, consultations with the cook about dinner the night of the arrival and many other items. "It doesn't make a bit of difference what we want for dinner Monday night. You know very well that Mrs. Mink plans the meals and will have just what she chooses. There's no use in telling the cook," remonstrated Christine.

"Well, I haven't time to go into all that now with Mrs. Mink. There are too many other things to think about, but I mean to have a talk with her very soon," Beryl had answered importantly and mysteriously.

Early in the afternoon of the day the cousins were expected the two girls went down into the kitchen. "Cook," as she was called by Mrs. Mink, was resting in her room before starting to prepare the meal for the travelers. When Beryl had suggested to the housekeeper that they have quite a gala meal she had vetoed it at once. "Nonsense, Miss Beryl! We'll have a plain dinner of soup, mutton and a good milk pudding. Them as has come all the way from India and then has to travel the Irish Sea on top of it ain't going to be too anxious about their victuals. We'll leave the trifle and tarts till the holidays." Mrs. Mink after this speech had gone calmly on her way, waddling about, peering here and there and finding almost everywhere something not altogether to her liking.

"Cross old Mink has gone herself to scold the butcher about something. She told Miss Peck she was going to shop a little at Pim's so she won't be snooping around for a while. Isn't it nice down here! I like the red brick floor, don't you? I can't believe they're coming to-night, Christine, can you?"

"No, it seems so romantic and like something in a story book," Christine answered. Beryl had gone on into the pantry and came back with a very determined look in her eyes. "It's just as I thought. Mrs. Mink has locked up all the provisions and it isn't fair. It's our house and our food. I hate her old bunch of keys. Oh, I'm going to have it out with Mrs. Mink, my dear child; just as soon as I haven't

quite so much on my mind, I'm going to have a serious talk with her about a good many things," Beryl spoke importantly.

There was something in the determined tilt of her chin which Christine knew well. "I'll be interested to see who wins out," she chuckled. She had on her hat and jacket and as Beryl started to go on slowly up the stairs, baffled in her wish to make something with which to welcome the travelers, she went on to the basement door.

She was back again in a half-hour with a few flowers done up in brown paper. A pink rose for the little white china vase on Victoria's and Joan's dressing tables and a few hardy marigolds for the little brown mug on Patrick's table. She peeped into the study as she was on her way upstairs and saw Miss Peck sitting by the big book-strewn table, a letter in her hand. She looked up as Christine came in. "I've a few flowers for the dressing tables. We'll start for Kingstown in less than an hour. I can't realize it."

"If I were you I would rest a little before we go," Miss Peck answered, glancing at Christine's excited face.

"I'm going to fix the flowers and then perhaps I will." Christine shut the door as she spoke and the governess turned again to her letter with a sigh. Would she be able to do all that lay before her? It was not that she dreaded the teaching. She had been graduated from Cheltenham and she had had some

years' experience in a good girl's school near her home. The children would all go to Alexandria College in Dublin for special studies. She reread a page of the letter that had come to her from India that morning, a letter from the mother of the children who were coming from India.

"Letting them go is like losing the sunshine for a while. They are all so different, but you will see that for yourself. Life in India, and especially the life up here in the hills, has made them different from other English children. I hope that you will try to understand them and that they will not be a trouble to you. I ask you above all to do your best for Keith. He has been away from me so much, and I will tell you, as I am so confidentially telling you other things, it is of Keith that I think the most—it is for him that I pray the most. He is so proud and strong and cold—above all he is so proud. I have not seen him for three years. He has had to be away from me at school; always he has been in England when I wanted him most. Win his confidence if you can." The letter went on to other matters. Miss Peck laid it in her lap and sat pondering. How could she win the confidence of a boy who was proud and strong and cold; she, a quiet, plain ordinary governess? She wanted to do so much, but her heart failed her.

They had only a twenty minutes' ride in the train to Kingstown, the port of Dublin. It had cleared and there was no mist at all, not even a haze over

Howth Head. The Bailey lighthouse shone bravely gold against a primrose sky. The train ran close to the sea and in spite of the fast gathering twilight the world outside seemed rose and gold and red. There had been a brilliant sunset, and as they came into Kingstown the waves dashed fiercely against the rocks. It was high tide and there was a sharp wind.

The boat was on time and although it seemed longer it was really only a very little while before she hove in sight. The light had faded and she looked very gray against the green sea and the pale sky. She was dark and there was something solemn about her. When she turned the corner by the pier dancing lights began to flicker. She suddenly became radiant and thankful. She had stolen across the three hours from Holyhead in North Wales, had come warily and in darkness for fear of submarines.

Miss Peck and the girls stood as near the gangplank as they could. The passengers began to come down. There was shouting back and forth and general bustle and confusion. "Why don't they come? They must be on the boat, for Uncle James wired that they had started." Christine peered through the dusk that had so suddenly fallen. Beryl was silent. She was so excited that her knees were shaking, but she would not have had Miss Peck or Christine know it for the world.

"There they are! I'm sure that is they. See,

Beryl—the tall girl and the others." Christine was right. They were the last ones to come down the gangplank. Victoria came first, the other two walking side by side just behind her. The next moment they were all greeting each other. They stood a little to one side away from the crowd and they had only a moment all of them together before Miss Peck went with Victoria to see about their baggage. Beryl and Christine had both had a very distinct impression of the three just in that little time. Joan was short and plump and had very curly hair and seemed to do all the talking for the three.

"It was so rough that we couldn't walk about at all coming over from Holyhead. No one was ill, though I don't think Blighty felt very well," she volunteered.

Patrick was pale and had a glint of light hair under his cap. He looked cold in spite of his heavy reefer jacket, but he smiled cheerfully. He held his coat close together at his throat and almost at once, after she had told about their journey, Joan said, "Do give Blighty a little air, Paddy, he will smother." She leaned forward as she spoke. Patrick turned down a corner of his coat and a wizened brown face peered out, two bright eyes blinking up at them.

"What is it! Can it be a monkey?" exclaimed Miss Peck bending down to gaze at it. Beryl and Christine gazed also, and Christine touched its forehead with her gloved hand.

"A monkey! Oh, what a darling," she said.

Miss Peck seemed almost too amazed to speak. "You mean that you brought him all the way from India with you?" she asked. "Yes," Patrick answered her. "We've had to be very careful of him since we've reached England. You see he's never been away from India before and neither have I." There was just a suspicion of a quiver about his chin as he spoke and in spite of being nearsighted Miss Peck saw it.

"What a fuss about a monkey!" It was Victoria who spoke and except for greeting them all it was the first thing she had said. Miss Peck spoke to her then about the baggage and they went off together.

"Vic didn't mean what she said about Blighty," said Patrick, looking up at the girls. "She thinks the world of him, doesn't she, Joan?"

Joan nodded.

"Yes, it's just her way. When she's feeling things she's always snappy. She's devoted to Blighty." She smiled at Christine and the two girls warmed to her at once.

"He is a dear. I'm so glad you brought him," Beryl said to her cordially and Christine added, "So am I."

Miss Peck and Victoria came up to them then.

"The luggage is in the carriage so we are all ready," announced the governess.

They stood there for just a moment longer. The

sea and sky were gray-blue and the stars were blue diamonds. Victoria looked off toward the way they had come.

"England is over there isn't it—and India—is way beyond?" Her eyes were shaded by her dark beaver hat. She wore a dark cloak like Joan's. Her hair was brown, darker than Beryl's, and it fell each side of her face, down to her waist. For a moment she seemed to forget them all as she looked off across the shimmering water. "Over there somewhere is India," she repeated.

VI.—Patrick and Blighty Meet Foggy

"I'm going to put some more coal on the fire. Let's go over and sit on the rug and talk a while." Christine drew their blue window curtains closer together as she spoke. Then she glanced across at Beryl who was brushing her hair in front of her dressing table.

"Put on more paper and kindling first or it will smoke," commanded Beryl brushing her hair with unusual vigor. Christine smiled as she went over to the fireplace. It was so like Beryl to tell her to do what she would have done anyway. She built up the fire and then sat down on the fur rug in front of it. Beryl came over, brush in hand, and sat down beside her sister. There was silence between them for a little while, each waiting for the other to begin. Christine wanted Beryl to talk about the cousins, longed to know just what she thought about them all, especially Victoria, but she knew her sister well enough to wait until she was ready to broach the subject.

The door leading to the dressing room was closed, as was also the one at the other end leading into the cousins' room. There was no excited going-to-bed-chatter that first night. Victoria had asked to go up

to their room directly after supper and had taken Joan with her. Christine had taken Patrick out to the storeroom off the lower hall leading to the garden, so that he could pick out a basket for Blighty. They found just the right one for him and his little red velvet cushion fitted it nicely. Christine had carried the cushion upstairs, Patrick following with Blighty, who had clutched him with firm, quiet desperation ever since they had arrived. Patrick had attempted to have him sit on a chair by his side during dinner, but to no avail. He sprang upon his young master with one bound and stayed clinging close to him, his head buried inside Patrick's jacket during the entire meal.

"He behaved much better on the journey and made friends with nearly everyone on the boat, didn't he, Paddy?" Joan had said and her brother had answered, looking from Miss Peck to his cousins, "Yes, it's very strange. He has never been this way before. It's the house perhaps, it's so big and dark and cold." He spoke as though the governess and his cousins were in some way to blame for this. Patrick was tired and distressed about the monkey.

"It's a very nice house of course," he went on politely, helping himself to vegetable-marrow.

"A good night's rest will set him up," Joan had said cheerily. It was she who kept their side of the conversation going throughout the meal. Victoria sat next Miss Peck and only spoke when she was directly spoken to. She was very pale and her dark

eyes looked very heavy under her straight dark brows. She refused the mutton and ate so little that Miss Peck was disturbed.

"I hope soon that you will be strong and hearty, my dear Victoria. Can you think of something special that you would care for to-night? A hot milk shake before you go to bed perhaps?" Miss Peck had asked kindly and Victoria had answered, "Nothing, thank you, Miss Peck." In short, dinner had not been a success and they were all glad when it was over.

"Do you think they liked the room? Joan seemed to, but I guess it's hard to tell about Victoria—she's quiet, but hasn't she a lovely face?" Christine was too interested to wait longer for Beryl's verdict and could not resist opening the subject. Still Beryl did not speak. "Do say something, Beryl," she pleaded.

"I don't know what to say," Beryl answered slowly. "They are so different. Of course, I knew they would be." She lapsed into a moment's silence, then she went on speaking eagerly. "They're interesting and Patrick is a darling. Victoria, well—you simply can't make her out, she's mysterious."

"Joan is a perfect dear, don't you think so?" Christine gave the fire a poke with the twisted iron poker as she spoke. "Yes, I think she's good fun, or will be, but even she is queer." Beryl had a puzzled look in her eyes as she spoke. "She's awfully young for her age I should say; she just talked about the monkey all the time and about their ayah.

I should think even Patrick would be old enough not to have a nurse."

There was a sort of cough behind them and they both looked around with a start. Joan stood near them. They had left the door into the hall slightly ajar and she had come in that way. "Your door was open so I came in without knocking because I thought you were asleep. I heard what you said just now," she went on smiling at Beryl. "I didn't mean to, but I couldn't help it. I've been down the hall to see Paddy and I came back this way because—well—because I thought if you were awake perhaps I'd stay a few minutes." There was just the faintest tremble in her voice as she said the last words.

Christine moved over to one side and Beryl patted the rug invitingly, saying, "Come on over and we'll all three get acquainted. I'm sorry you heard what I said, but it wasn't anything much, was it!" Joan sat down between her two cousins and held out her hands toward the fire.

"No, just about our having an ayah. She's been with us always, ever since Vic was a baby. We love her very much. She wanted to come with us, but some friends of mummy's were coming over on the ship and they promised to take great care of us. Mummy needed our ayah more than we did," Joan swallowed a big lump in her throat as she spoke. "I've been down the hall to Paddy's room but he's sound asleep with Blighty's head on his shoulder," she went on.

"Then he didn't stay in the basket. We were afraid he wouldn't!" exclaimed Christine.

"Is Victoria asleep?" asked Beryl.

Joan shook her head. "I don't know. She may be pretending. It's hard to tell. She's very, very homesick and unhappy, I'm afraid." Joan looked apologetically at the other two as she spoke. "You see she didn't want to come. She begged and begged mother to let her stay, but it was no use."

"Poor Victoria!" put in Christine.

"It was just as hard for Joan and Patrick to leave their mother. I think you're splendid, Joan, for you don't think of how you're feeling yourself at all." Beryl smiled warmly at Joan as she spoke and jumping up ran over to the bed and brought back their blue and white downy. "Wrap this around you, that's it. I know you're cold. We're so glad you came in, aren't we, Christine?"

Christine nodded. "Yes, but I want to know so much all at once. I'm bursting with questions. Oh, there are dozens of things I want to know about: India, and Victoria, and the monkey, and your mother, and the ayah, and everything you did on the voyage, and about Keith and—all sorts of things."

They all laughed at the wild jumble that Christine wanted to know about and Joan said, "There are a good many things I want to ask about: Miss Peck, and the house, and what Ireland is like, and about all you do in America—oh, dozens of things." She laughed happily as she spoke and they all felt that

the ice was broken and for Joan the worst of the strangeness was over.

"My dear, there is nothing at all exciting about Pecky. She's a dear, but as meek as an angel and not a bit strict—old-fashioned though. Ireland? Well, we really don't know it very well ourselves We've lived in rooms and haven't been here very long and it's rained a great deal," answered Beryl.

Christine thought of Wisp and the barge and was silent.

"There is one person, though, that you will really love. That is our dear, beloved housekeeper, Mrs. Mink, whom you didn't see to-night because she is having tea in Glasnevin with her friend who is cousin to the man who keeps the cemetery lodge!" Beryl smiled maliciously as she spoke.

"Mrs. Mink, what an odd name," said Joan.

"She is odd, my dear. That's a mild word. She's a perfect curio and the most utterly disagreeable person I've ever met. She keeps everything under lock and key and treats me as though I were eight years old." Beryl spoke half in fun, but there was a sparkle in her eyes which was partly anger. "You wait and see, my new cousin Joan! I'll get the best of little Mrs. Mink or know the reason why!"

The others laughed and Joan crept nearer the fire, holding the comforter close about her.

"You mustn't mind Vic for she'll be better soon. She's very homesick now. She loves India and she says she can never be happy away from it." Joan

spoke seriously, tears in her brown eyes, and Beryl said briskly,

"Nonsense, we're all going to have splendid times here and it's the best thing that could have happened to Victoria, coming away now." Beryl used her most grown-up tone and Joan seemed impressed.

"Don't you see, Joan, we must learn to know Ireland; we must find out all the wonderful things about it!" As she spoke, Christine thought of Wisp and the enchanting afternoon on the funny old river Liffey. How bravely the sun had shone through the clouds, gilding the dreary old barge. How wildly blue the sky had been, reflecting itself in the brown water. Wisp sitting in the shadow of the barge, her hands in her lap. Wisp telling of the fairies!

"I'm planning all sorts of things for us to do," said Beryl. "We might get up a club and call it the Cousins' Club—Keith can be the honorary member." Beryl waited for Joan to say something about her brother, but all she said was,

"Goody! I think you're ripping, Beryl, simply ripping, and I know we'll all have wonderful times if only Vic will cheer up and Paddy keeps well!"

By this time the three felt as though they had always known each other and they chatted sociably for a long time. Joan told about picnics at dawn in the Himalayas and of moonlight horseback rides, and her cousins were so enthralled in all she said that they told her she must wait to hear all they had to tell her, until another time.

It was very late when Joan crept back to her room. Victoria lay with her beautiful brown hair loose on the pillow, one arm flung above her head. Her sister stood watching her for a moment. "Poor Vic," she thought. "I'm afraid she won't be able to stand it. She hated coming and she won't try to make friends." Joan crept in beside her sister and put both her arms about her. After a moment Victoria turned and, half asleep as she was, laid her head on Joan's shoulder. "It's so cold," she whispered.

"Yes, we don't need the punkahs to-night, do we?" Joan whispered back.

With their arms around each other the two girls fell asleep in the great rose-curtained bed.

Foggy Moyne rattled along in his cart at a great pace early the next morning, drew up in front of a number of silent, cold looking houses on Fitzwilliam Square, delivered his beef or mutton or whatever the order might be and came driving up in a flurry to 50 Fitzwilliam Square. He did not shout out to Jumbles as was his usual habit before leaving him at the curbing, some such remark as, "Hold the fort while I'm away, Jumbles me dear," or, "I'll be back in the wink of an eyelish, me darlin'!" He opened the "Tradesman's Entrance" door very carefully and stole quietly up to the kitchen door, opened it and peered inside. Cook had just come downstairs and was sleepily beginning to light the kitchen fire. She eyed Foggy not unkindly.

"She ain't up yet, is she? I thought maybe I'd beat her to it this mornin'!" he said. Foggy's curly head came into full view around the kitchen door as he spoke. Almost at the same moment Mrs. Mink's small round face appeared in the opposite doorway. Foggy was too late! He threw the parcel on the table and was about to dash away when the housekeeper's voice boomed out at him.

"Young boy, just you wait a minute. You've left the wrong order twice in a week. I reported you yesterday and I"—Mrs. Mink never finished her sentence. She left the door open behind her and something had come into the kitchen while she was speaking, something brown and strange and wizened that hesitated for an instant and then with a swift spring flashed past her, circled Foggy and quicker than thought was out the half opened kitchen door.

There was no doubt about Mrs. Mink's being frightened. She could not speak for a moment and then she only ejaculated, "Oh, dear, what a turn I've had! What was it! oh, dear, I feel so shaken!" She sat down heavily on a kitchen chair, her apron at her face and as Cook told a friend later in the day, "She was fair scared to bits and it was a good sight to see her off her high horse for once!"

It all happened in a twinkling and before Mrs. Mink had gotten her breath Foggy had run after the monkey. In and out and around about they had the chase; down the garden walk, across to the summer house, then like a flash of brown, up the haw-

thorn tree by the stone wall climbed Blighty. He held on to a branch with one long paw and looked down at his pursuer. As Foggy told Wisp that afternoon, "He fair winked at me, saucy like!" They gazed at each other, fat jolly-faced Foggy and funny frightened Blighty.

"Ye needn't mind me—shure I like ye and we'll be friends if ye'll come on down quiet like!" he persuaded. Blighty answered with some gibberish that made him even more interesting to Foggy but some one was running as fast as his short legs would carry him down the path and Foggy turned to see who it was. He knew at once that it must be one of the children from India of whom Christine had told him the afternoon on the barge.

"I thought I saw him up the tree," gasped Patrick between breaths. "He's so scared, last night he slept with his arm right around my neck. It was the cleaning thing in the hall that made him run

through to the kitchen just now." Patrick looked up at Blighty as he spoke.

"I'll just take a run up the tree after him if ye say the word," suggested Foggy. "I'd have gone before but I thought he would run away down and off before I could get him agin." He grinned at Patrick as he spoke and that young person grinned back, glad of the friendliness of Foggy's tone.

"There's a woman in the kitchen who is frightened. She kept saying 'Oh dearie me!' I couldn't stop to tell her he wouldn't hurt her," said Patrick.

"Shure that's the housekeeper and she be the divil in all—beggin' yer pardon," answered Foggy.

"We came last night and I didn't see her—we came all the way from India and we're going to live in this house," volunteered Patrick, still gazing up at the monkey. Blighty had come down a little way. Suddenly Patrick spoke to him in a strange language, just a few words. He started down, hesitated and stopped. Patrick looked over his shoulder at Foggy. "That's Hindoostani and it's all he understands," he explained.

"Well, holy saints, ain't it queer!" exclaimed the butcher boy.

Blighty was climbing carefully, swinging himself from branch to branch. He let Patrick pick him off the lowest one, and putting his arms about his young master's neck, looked at Foggy as much as to say, "I'm safe now from all of you!" They walked slowly back through the garden, Patrick

speaking a little anxiously. "He's trembling all over; he's scared and cold."

"Well, maybe we could fix him up some kind o' outfit to keep him warm," suggested Foggy, his kind heart warming to Patrick and his monkey.

"That's a good idea, and I'll speak to the girls about it," Patrick answered as they reached the kitchen steps. "Won't you come inside?" he asked. "Bless you, no, I'm the butcher boy. I've got to git on me way," answered Foggy cheerily. Patrick looked back at him as did also the monkey.

"You'll come again, won't you? Blighty'll be more friendly next time—it's all very strange to us all," he went on confidentially, as Foggy still lingered.

"A bit odd to yez comin' so far maybe, but it's a goodish place, is Dublin. Wait till ye try an outside car on a good road. Wait till ye have a picnic up Powerscourt way," Foggy nodded encouragingly, then hearing some one call, "Master Patrick, Master Patrick," in anxious tones, ran around the corner of the house to where the faithful Jumbles waited patiently.

Late that afternoon he whistled at the foot of the ladder on the top floor of Jeffers Court. There was a flutter of the blue curtain, then a shock of red-gold hair and Wisp's face underneath it.

"Is it back so early ye are?" she exclaimed and was down the ladder before he could answer her.

"It ain't so early and I've somewhat to tell ye.

They've come, up there on the square, the children from India. I seen the boy this morning!"

"Master Keith from school in England?" asked Wisp.

"No, Master Patrick. I heard them a-callin' of him. He's got a monkey named Blighty and it run away down the garden and up a tree quick as fire. He's queer like them monkeys up at the Zoo, but kind o' different like, sort o' human and Master Patrick he talk to him like he was a person."

They sat down on the top step, Wisp with her chin in her hands. It was cold there at the tip-top of Jeffers Court. Foggy turned up the collar of his jacket and whistled between his teeth.

" 'Tain't what ye could call extra 'comfortable up here to-day. Blighty was fair frozen and Master Patrick he looked a good bit like an icicle."

As he spoke Foggy leaned back against the dank side of the wall. It was jolly to be through with his work for the day and to talk things over with his girl friend.

"Ain't the wind queerish?" she said softly. "Sometimes, nights, up there under the roof it do seem to tell me things." She put her hand to her forehead as she spoke, brushing her bright hair away from her face. "Last night I says to it: 'Mr. Wind, is it that I'll be livin' different some day with a real cottage o' me own lookin' off on a moor? Will I have shoes and hair-ribbons and nice dresses and books?' " She looked down again into the gloom before she

went on, and then she said: "It kind o' seemed as though old Mr. Wind answered, 'Yes.' "

"Master Patrick had a good bit to say about their comin' over all that way on the boat!"

Foggy whistled expecting a torrent of remarks or eager questions, but none came. Wisp sat crouched over her folded hands.

" 'Tain't no use, Foggy. I'm different. I love to hear about the Fitzwilliam Square children but I ain't like 'em," she said at last.

"Ye bet ye ain't. There ain't one o' 'em that can hold a candle to ye," Foggy answered vigorously.

"Ye think so just because you and I is chums, but I ain't." Wisp looked over her shoulder smiling a little as she spoke.

"Ain't ye taught us all here? What about the class? All I know about books and figgers is what ye taught me. Ye think too little o' all ye do. We'd be fair good for nothing here without ye," he answered, so eager to comfort her that he thumped the floor vigorously.

"Yes, I've many things to be a lookin' out for around here. It don't do to be dreamin' o' things way off, it don't indeed. Ye do be a good friend, Foggy. Maybe ye'll be a great man some day. I'll ask the stars for ye," she said.

The wind sobbed eerily, mingling with the harsh sounds below moaning along gusty corridors.

Suddenly a voice came to them from the lower

landing. The gray figure of Auntie Moneypenny was below.

"What be ye a talkin' of?" she called up.

"We do be a speakin' o' the children from India, auntie, dear. Them as has come to live with a teacher lady in a big grand house. Foggy, he leaves meat there every day. It's the children that's come to the Square as I was tellin' ye about," Wisp answered her again.

"Glory be! Ye'll freeze to the stairs! Come on down the two o' yez. I've a bit o' fire and three herrin's and some cockles." This from the voice at the foot of the stairs.

"We'd like to, auntie, and it's good ye are to ask us." Wisp stood up and the two ran down the stairs to where the little old woman awaited them.

"Foggy will tell ye about the monkey from India and Master Patrick," began Wisp.

"Shure, ye do be thinkin' all the time of them children. Come now, we'll put on the kettle and make ourselves happy." Auntie Moneypenny laid her hand on Wisp's shoulder as she spoke. "Ye have plenty to be a thinkin' of right here amongst yer own," she said to her.

"That's what I've been a tellin' of her," said Foggy.

VII.—The Class in the Court

Christine told Beryl that the first days after the cousins came were the funniest ones she ever knew. She often spoke of them in after years. Sometimes when she would burst out laughing over apparently nothing at all, people would say, "What is so funny?" and she would answer, "Mrs. Mink and the monkey!"

She told Beryl it was all very funny as they walked about the garden together a few days after the arrival.

"I really don't see what's so amusing about it, Christine. I'm awfully glad, of course, that Mrs. Mink is afraid of Blighty—that is funny, of course, and it's good to see her in awe of something, but it

certainly isn't pleasant to have Victoria going about looking like a tragic ghost." Beryl looked as puzzled as she had done the night they had arrived and for a few minutes the two walked along in silence.

Then Christine said comfortingly, "I think she's a little better. I really do, for she quite cheered up about the pantomime party. She's ever and ever so fond of Keith, Joan says, and she's counting the days until he comes—let's see, Christmas Eve will be coming along in three days!"

"Yes, and we'll all be homesick together then. After all, we're away from home too, and none of them seem to realize it; even Joan forgets that America is our home, not over here! Do you remember last year, Christine, Rita's party at the country club and the fun we had sleighing home?" Beryl sighed as she spoke. The last few days had not been altogether easy and they had tried the patience of nearly all of the household at 50 Fitzwilliam Square. Mrs. Mink had been very angry about poor Blighty and had shown her temper in many ways. Miss Peck was worried about Victoria and afraid they would all take cold. There had been a delay about one of their trunks, and altogether it had not been an easy breaking in.

On this particular day, however, the sun shone bravely and there was again that hint of spring about the garden. Christine left Beryl pottering about, picking out weeds and planning where she would

plant things a little later. She was always happiest when she was planning. Christine went inside, and upstairs to the study. There was to be no thought of lessons until after the holidays and Keith's departure for school. Victoria was standing by the window looking out into the garden. Blighty sat in the midst of the book-strewn table and as Christine came in he "talked," as Patrick called his high squeaky gibberish.

There were voices from the garden proclaiming the fact that Joan and Patrick had joined Beryl. Christine went over to the window and stood beside her cousin, looking down at the low hedges and winding walks below. She thought at first of suggesting to Victoria that they both go down to the others in the garden. Then with one of her sudden impulses she said instead, speaking timidly, "Would you like to go for a walk, just the two of us together?" Victoria turned and looked at her, smiling slightly.

"Yes, if you like," she answered indifferently.

They went out the front door without the others knowing that they had gone, and Christine turned in the direction of the green. It was a walk of several blocks and at first they did not speak at all.

Then Christine said impulsively, "Oh, you just can't know how glad I am that you're really here, Victoria. I know you're homesick now, but I've a feeling—" she hesitated as though trying to find the right words, "I've a feeling that we're all of us going to have a wonderful year." She stopped sud-

denly. Why did she always speak so extravagantly? She glanced at her cousin who turned toward her and smiled again a little wanly.

"I dare say we shall get used to it all, but it seems strange now," answered Victoria. Christine assented eagerly.

"I know, oh, really I do, Victoria. You see it was very strange to me at first and then suddenly"—she paused and before she knew it she was telling her cousin about the gray afternoon when she first met Wisp in the green. They came to the green as she was speaking and they went in and sat down on a bench.

In spite of the sun it was too cold to sit there for more than a few minutes. They could hear the voices of children playing near the pond. Afterward Christine wondered how she had ever had the courage to tell Victoria so much. It was indeed, the very best thing she could have done for in spite of herself her cousin was interested. Christine learned later on that it was always best to come out with things with Victoria. Her cousin began to speak rapidly, eagerly. There was a curious accent to her otherwise very English voice, nothing definite, rather as though having always heard Hindoostani about her, some of its quaint charm had touched her.

"I couldn't say anything before, but I knew you would be the one who would understand—Miss Peck, oh, she is kind no doubt, but she does not think a great deal. Beryl—" Victoria raised her hands

with an odd gesture, letting them fall again into her lap. "Beryl is so strong and sure and noisy!"

"Beryl is splendid," put in Christine stoutly.

Victoria nodded. "Yes that is a good word for her, but it is you I would make my friend." She might have been a queen conferring a favor as she spoke and before Christine could answer her she went on. "Tell me more of your adventures, more about Wisp—what a funny little name!" she cried.

It was easy to tell Victoria things. There was no doubt of that. She seemed to understand and she somehow by her interest made it all seem a fairy story.

"Let me be with you in all that you do. I must not be bored, do you understand? I want to live and feel and know things—lessons and that old cold house—oh, I must have more than that. You and I, Christine, we shall have adventures."

It was all very interesting. Victoria choosing her for a friend! She laid her hand lightly on Christine's arm.

"We will have this little secret for ourselves—a quest for adventure, you and I. The others will think we are going on in an everyday stupid sort of way. They will not know that we are making stories out of Ireland. That will be splendid."

Christine jumped up delightedly. "It's going to be the greatest fun. I'm so glad we're friends, Victoria. You'll love having Beryl for a friend when you really know her. Now you must meet Wisp. She

can tell you stories. She's promised to tell me some of the things she makes up in her Fairy Cottage. Think of it, Victoria, she lives in a tenement, right up under the roof in a tiny little room and she calls it Fairy Cottage!"

There was no doubt about Victoria's being interested. The reason was that it was all new to her. She had never known of anything like it before. She had lived way up in the far Himalayas and though she had read and dreamed she had never fancied anything as odd as this. A little poor girl who lived up under a roof, alone, and who called her home a fairy cottage!

They walked on through the green where, because of the brightness of the day a number of nurses aired their young charges. The ducks were chasing each other about wildly. Some of them came waddling out of the water and followed the girls, squeaking a request for bread.

"Not to-day, old grandpa," said Christine to one of the most persistent, and they walked on in the sunshine, Victoria still talking eagerly to her cousin.

"I've wondered what it could be like here and I've thought about you and Beryl. It was always something for the future. I mean England. I was coming when I was eighteen. Mummy was coming, too. Then Patrick was ill and they said we must come now. What should I do if it weren't for you, Christine? You will help me to be happy, will you not?" There was something very child-like in the

way Victoria drew near to Christine, taking her arm and looking at her with her mournful dark eyes.

"Oh, Victoria!" exclaimed Christine. "I'll do anything to make it easier. I know how dreadfully hard it must have been for you to leave your father and mother and the life that you love, there in India."

Victoria touched Christine's arm. "Hush," she said. "I cannot talk about that—not now."

They walked on through the winding pathways and across a charming little bridge that led across the duck pond to the other side of the green. Christine told her cousin about the afternoon on the barge and of the story Wisp had told. "Beryl says I'm very young for my age and I guess I am for I love to hear about fairies and I make up all sorts of things. It makes everything so much more interesting. I even make up stories about the garden at Fitzwilliam Square, though it's so bare and brown. If only I could really believe things as Wisp does."

They stopped for a moment before a statue. It was a head and bust done in marble, and there was something so calm and still and brooding about it that it held their interest for the moment. "It's Mangan, and he was a very great poet, one of the best ones Ireland has ever had. He has a good face and loved all beautiful things, I think," said Christine.

They went on to the upper entrance gate and Victoria exclaimed suddenly, "Couldn't we find the lit-

tle girl? Couldn't we go and see where she lives?" Christine hesitated. She had thought of it before herself. But would Wisp be glad, or sorry?

"We might try, if you like," she answered her cousin. "She lives at Jeffers Court on Cuff Street; it's a very gloomy, dirty street," she went on looking doubtfully at Victoria.

"Never mind, it cannot harm us and I should like to see what it is, this very dismal place. I should like also to see Wisp," Victoria said, and what she wanted to do, if it were at all possible, she generally did. They crossed the street and stood for a moment uncertainly on the corner. Then Victoria looked up at the street sign.

"See!" she exclaimed. "This is Cuff Street. The sign was printed in English and in Irish too."

Christine had turned away walking over to where a group of children stood in front of an old man. They were mostly Cuff Street children, but among the crowd were a few well dressed prosperous-looking boys and girls. Victoria came over and stood by Christine and together they watched the old man. He was standing near the corner busily at work and he was so absorbed in what he was doing that he seemed not to notice the children about him at all. He was making vegetable flowers. A bag of turnips lay on a camp stool beside him and near them was what looked like a small bunch of forget-me-nots and two red roses. A little girl in the crowd took up one of the roses and put a coin in its place. "That's

it, little lady, that's it," muttered the old man, still busy with his work and not looking up at all. Some one else put down a coin, picked up the forget-me-nots and went on. Very soon a group of children straggled away down the gloomy haunts of Cuff Street, others going off toward the green, and before they knew it Christine and Victoria found themselves alone watching the old man.

It was fun to see how clever he really was. He would first pick up a turnip, rolling it lovingly in his hand, and then with his penknife he would cut it into the shape of a rose or a daisy, a forget-me-not or a geranium. Then he would dip it in one of the little cans that stood at his feet on the sidewalk and it would come out a glowing rose or a yellow-hearted daisy. Victoria watched him intently.

"He is clever," she whispered to Christine. "I like to watch him because he is clever." The old man looked up suddenly and smiled.

"Help yourself, little lady, and don't mind if 'ye ain't got a coin handy. Thim that likes 'em so can have 'em free!" he said.

"I'll take a rose, and what will you have, Christine?" Victoria turned to Christine as she spoke.

"The forget-me-nots," answered Christine.

"I have coins to pay for both, but thank you just the same," said Victoria, putting some pennies on the chair and taking up the vegetable flowers.

"Who taught you to make these?" she asked the old man and he answered her with a smile. "He

ain't livin' now, the man what taught me, little lady, and where he learned to make 'em was a secret. He's nivir told no one." The vegetable flower man had a very nice face and a wise one too. Christine took her bunch of forget-me-nots off the stool and spoke to him. "Can you tell me where Jeffers Court is, please? We want to find a girl whose name is Kathleen Magillicuddy." Christine smiled as she said the last. It seemed so absurd for her Cuff Street friend to have any name but Wisp.

"Do I know Kathleen? Shure I do, little lady. There ain't no one about here that don't know her. Jeffers Court ain't much for the likes o' you though, little lady. I live mesilf in Johnson's Court further down—that's fairish, but Jeffers Court ain't a king's palace. No, by the Saints it ain't, little lady." He peered down the street. "It do be the fifth hole in the wall and ye can go on through into the court," he directed her.

"Thank you. Won't you tell us your name?" asked Victoria.

"They do call me The Vegetable Flower Man," he answered her, and as they turned away he lifted his faded green-gray hat. They went on down the dirty sidewalk, skirting flapping pieces of paper that waved about in the brisk wind. When they came to the fifth opening in the wall they went inside, finding themselves in a dark enclosure, beyond which was a court. Near by voices of children reached them and they went on until they came to the court itself.

It was deeply shadowed but the sun made a circle of light in the center and here sat a group of children in a row and in front of them stood Wisp. Above them was the harsh jangle of voices calling back and forth. Some cats snarled at each other from opposite ends of the court. Somewhere in the distance there was the cracked wail of a very old woman singing a baby to sleep.

The children sat on a low bench and were so intent on their own affairs that they were in no way disturbed by the noise and confusion going on around them. Peg sat at one end of the bench and next her were two girls of eight and ten. They were Molly and Aggie Kinsale.

Wisp had lived in their noisy household until she had found the Fairy Cottage and claimed it for her own. Dawson came next to Aggie Kinsale and was as solemn and pale as ever. Then came a stout bov

of about eleven who wore a long cloak, which evidently did not belong to him, and around whose neck was tied a purple muffler, or rather one that had once been purple but had faded to grayish black. Every now and then he kicked Dawson's shins, but when Wisp gave him a searching look over the top of her book he appeared to be as innocent as could be. At the end of the row was Tin, his curls bobbing in the breeze, his whole being absorbed in devouring a very sour orange. He was the only one of the pupils who was allowed to do pretty much as he liked. This was Wisp's school and the class was in full session.

She held a notebook in her hand, brown paper donated by Foggy and sewed together with large stitches of black thread. As Christine and Victoria stopped to watch them from the shadow of the entry, Wisp was reading aloud. She read rapidly, because she was not sure of keeping the interest of her audience for very long and she had to vary her program a good deal.

"I'll just read out the bits I've put down about the last time and none of yez will be very proud o' yourselves," she remarked, scanning the page. 'Peg Casey is head o' the class wid a mark o' ninety. Aggie Kinsale has eighty-five and Molly Kinsale has eighty." She paused a moment and then went on reading slowly and dramatically. "The rest is as follows: Dawson Casey sixty," and she paused again, then went on. "O'Sullivan Finney is zero!

Tin, I give a mark of good because he answered a question right."

"He nivir did!" ejaculated O'Sullivan, not at all pleased to be beaten by a three-year-old.

"Yes, indeed!" returned Wisp. "I says, 'Where was ye born, Tin?' an' he up and says 'Tinnyhinch,' just as good as could be. Ain't that where he was born and ain't that why he's named what he is? It's jest as much geography as answerin' what part o' Ireland is Galway." Wisp spoke firmly looking severely at her most unpromising pupil.

O'Sullivan was silenced for a moment and then burst out with, "Ain't it holidays at real school? Let's do somethin' else!"

Wisp turned on him. "Go and do what ye please, O'Sullivan Finney. Go be the dunce that ye are. Ain't they said to school where ye go that ye don't know nothin'? Ain't I tryin' to help ye?" O'Sullivan subsided into gloom and the class went on.

Wisp started to speak but was interrupted several times. First by a cat fight and then by a harsh voice from an upper window. "Quit that soon now, and go on the errands I told ye, Aggie and Moll. As for Kathleen, shure, she might be doin' somethin' to pay back some of the board and bed she's had from me!" Wisp looked up at the window, still holding the book in her hands.

"Ain't I goin' to whin I start sellin' flowers in the spring?" she answered her.

"Ma's awful cross to-day," remarked Molly

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Kinsale. There was a moment's silence broken by a welcoming shriek from Tin who stooped to caress a gentle dirty gray cat, more peaceably inclined than the other ones. Then Wisp went on with the class.

"We ain't time for much more now, but we'll meet on the upper landin' to-morrow night at five and maybe Foggy Moyne'll be there to help wid the singing. For to-morrow, all that kin write good enough for me to read it is to hand in some lines about the Battle of the Boyne, and seein' as how it was fought right out here to Drogheda and any one of us that kin scrape the tram fare can git there in twenty minutes, all of us ought to know about it."

Victoria whispered to Christine, "Isn't she a darling?" and Christine nodded smilingly.

"I'll end the class by reading out o' the book the Sunday school lady give me. I've been a practisin' of it up to Fairy Cottage and I kin say it most all correct if I go slow. It's the most beautifulest poem what I'm goin' to read to ye and I want attention. Peg, you hold Tin on your lap. The poem is writ by a man named Blake. It says so on the cover!" Peg obediently went over to her brother, picked him up, cat and all, and sat down again. Then Wisp read aloud this poem.

THE LAMB

Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life and bid thee feed

By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice.
Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb,
He is meek, and He is mild;
He became a little child.
I a child and thou a lamb,
We are called by His name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

Wisp read slowly and distinctly, hesitating over some of the hardest words and when she had finished she said importantly, "School is over for to-day and let all file out in order."

As she finished reading Christine and her cousin stepped back into the shadow, and from there on into the sunshine toward home.

VIII.—The Pantomime

"I'm goin' out, Peg. Ye can go up to the cottage and stay till I come back if ye want to. I'll not be long!" Wisp called from the hole in the wall as she went out into the damp winter night.

It was very cold with the fierce penetrating dampness that seems to eat into one's bones. Wisp walked quickly, wrapping the shawl that she wore over her jacket more closely about her. She made her way through the crowds easily for she was so thin that she seemed to dance her way through them without touching them. It was the evening of the second day before Christmas.

"To-morrow's the night Mr. Keith will be after comin' and they'll all be off to the pantomime," she

thought as she hurried on. She knew this because Foggy had told her. He and Patrick had become friends over their mutual interest in Blighty.

How she would love to go! It wasn't just the pleasure—it was thinking about it afterward, telling others. She had dreamed of it and thought of it and up in Fairy Cottage she had prayed over it. Foggy had promised to take her next year, but that time seemed a long way off! She felt in her pocket for the threepenny bit. She had saved it from her errand money. It had meant being hungry but she wanted to buy a gift for Christine. She turned off Grafton Street, thronged as it was with motors going theaterward and went on swiftly until the great mass of Christ Church Cathedral hove in sight. Passing it she turned into Francis Street, reaching the Iveagh market.

Entering the low doorway she stood looking about the paper-strewn room, at the rude booths where good natured voices called out their wares. Then she went on across the room, stopping in front of a stall at the far end and smiling a greeting at the fat shawl-covered owner.

"Good-evenin' to ye, Mrs. O'Fee, and a Happy Christmas. I've come to find a bit o' a present for a friend o' mine. I don't know as ye'll be after havin' anything I want!"

"Shure, darlin', I've a choice o' all sorts, grand they be some o' them. Ye're welcome to take till midnight lookin' 'em over!" Mrs. O'Fee waved her

hand dramatically over the contents of her table and then raised her voice. "This way for all that wants illigant garments. Coats goin' cheap. Tables goin' at loss to mesilf. Books as good as new and hats that would grace the head o' an empress!"

Wisp cast her eye over the contents of the table, covered with an array of secondhand junk, boots, shoes, hats and a many-colored array of ribbons and odds and ends more or less the worse for wear. Her heart sank. There was nothing that she could dream of giving to Christine for a Christmas gift. She had hoped that there might be some little thing that a three-penny bit could buy. After all it was not such a tiny sum! Auntie Moneypenny had told her that once in a great while one could find odd things that were pretty in the market, but she had said that the times of finding them were rare.

She was about to turn away disheartened when something white caught her eye. It was wedged in between a pair of shoes and a cotton lace collar. It was a tiny china box and on the cover were two blue-gray doves. It was made of cheap china, but it had a certain charm. There was about it a quaintness. To Wisp it was beautiful. "What be the price o' this, if ye please, Mrs. O'Fee?" she asked the woman.

The owner of the booth turned and saw the little box in Wisp's hand. "It do be sixpence, but I'm a robbin' o' mesilf for a half crown is what I should be after asking," she answered.

"It do be more than I have. I've but threepenny bit. Could you be after lettin' me have it on trust do ye think? I could pay ye a ha'penny a week now for a bit and when I'm sellin' flowers regular in the spring, I can pay up quick!" Wisp looked at Mrs. O'Fee eagerly. She wanted the little white box for Christine very much, but she held her head high and she kept a pleading note out of her voice.

Mrs. O'Fee considered her thoughtfully for a moment. Then she said with a chuckle, "Ye wint off from Minnie Kinsale and found a bit o' a place for yersilf. Glory be, but ye have the nerve wid ye! Take the bit o' box and I'll give ye the beautiful little treasure for the threepenny bit," she sighed forlornly, holding out her fat hand for the money. Wisp gave her the coin and hesitated.

"I want to pay what it's worth, Mrs. O'Fee," she began, but the market woman cut her short.

" 'Tis a bargain! Seein' as how it's Christmas!" she exclaimed, and then pounding on the table she called out in strident tones, praising her wares.

Wisp said a fervent "Thank ye," and holding the precious box under her shawl, she scurried home through the narrow back streets in the shadow of the cathedral.

At 50 Fitzwilliam Square all was festive and exciting. "To-morrow" was on every one's tongue, and the thought of the pantomime and the arrival of Keith was in every one's mind.

The cousins were all together in the study, Blighty

sitting in the midst of tissue paper and ribbon, watching with his inquisitive eyes all that was going on about him. During the last few days he had become a little more reconciled to the household at Fitzwilliam Square and did not follow Patrick about every second like a frightened brown shadow.

The cousins were mysterious about the presents they had brought for Beryl and Christine, and these two young people were full of curiosity about them. Victoria still looked pale and was still reserved and quiet. Sometimes Christine could hardly believe that they had had that stolen visit to Jeffers Court together. Then again she would realize with a feeling of delight that her cousin turned to her and that she found comfort in being with her. Beryl seemed to be timid with Victoria. "They don't understand each other. When they do they'll be splendid friends," Christine thought reassuringly.

Their new dresses had come home from Switzer's, a splendid shop on Grafton Street. They were very simple, but delightful. Beryl's was rose and Christine's blue. They had tried them on the night before in front of their looking-glass and Joan had greatly admired them. Victoria had come in languidly while they were trying them on and had given her approval.

"The rose is charming for you, Beryl. It goes well with your cheeks," she had said, and Beryl had flushed with pleasure.

"I wonder what Victoria and Joan will wear to-

morrow night," Christine had remarked after the cousins had gone on into their room. She was thinking about it as they did up presents there in the firelit study.

"We're not giving ourselves presents this year. Doesn't it seem strange? But I'm glad we gave a little for the refugees instead. Oh, what a Christmas for them!" exclaimed Beryl, speaking softly to Christine as they stood side by side at a far corner of the room. They had come to a big wicker basket with some presents and stood together for a moment looking out into the darkness.

The refugee children! Yes, it would be a hard Christmas for them and for others, too. Wisp—what of her? What kind of a holiday time would she have? Well, she would imagine one anyhow. Perhaps way up there in Fairy Cottage she would be very happy in her own way! Christine thought with satisfaction of her presents for her new friend. A handkerchief, such a pretty one. Christine felt sure that Wisp would like it; three copy books, real ones with nice stiff covers, a box of pencils, and a box of chocolates.

Victoria had suggested the copy books and had supplied them. "Let us keep it a secret, the going to Jeffers Court," she had said. Both the girls had in mind the picture of Wisp keeping school there in the dingy tenement and while she had watched her from the shadows a wish had come to Christine for Wisp. The pantomime! How Wisp would love it,

the color and sparkle and music, and, above all, the fairies! If only she could come with them, but that was impossible, of course! Miss Peck's face rose before Christine! They would not understand!

"How many seats are there in our box?" she asked, looking down at the parcel and speaking as naturally as she could.

"Let me see! oh, a number I think! It is one of the largest ones, quite a little room by itself," Miss Peck answered absently, addressing a Christmas letter to her father in England.

It was then that the idea came to Christine. The box was large, and as she stood there tying the ribbon about a package she remembered some of the things her father had told her of Dublin. "It was always good to happen into a friend's box at the Gaiety Theater; nice roomy little places they were, too!" He had been in a particularly jolly mood when he had told them about it. Well, why not try to smuggle Wisp in, let her enjoy the pantomime in a shadowy corner of the box, see them all and enjoy them, too, as Christine knew so well she would do. No one need know, but would it be possible?

She woke early the next morning and crept downstairs as soon as she was dressed. She knew that Foggy came with the meat and she had a note for him to give to their mutual friend. This was the note:

DEAR WISP:

Will you try to be near the entrance to the Gaiety Theater to-night? Perhaps I can arrange it so that you can see the pantomime, but you must promise to be very quick and quiet and do exactly as I say. Be waiting as soon after eight as you can. Love from Christine.

Late that afternoon just as Lizzie, the housemaid, was bringing the tea things, the doorbell rang sharply and Patrick came in with a telegram which he handed to Victoria. She read it through quickly and drew her brows together in a frown.

"When she looks like that, something is wrong," whispered Joan to Beryl. They knew at once what it was that really had happened. She looked up, turning toward Miss Peck and still frowning.

"I've a wire from Keith. He says Uncle James wants him to spend Christmas Eve in London with him. He will take the early train from Euston in the morning and he won't reach here until the afternoon boat!"

There was a moment's dismayed silence after Victoria made the dire announcement and then Miss Peck spoke in her usual way: "You poor, dear children, I know just how disappointed you must be! What a pity! Well, we shall have to console ourselves as best we can!"

It was not so easily done, for Victoria refused to be consoled by any one or anything, and although she said nothing, she frowned through the very good dinner which Mrs. Mink with sudden Christmas

spirit had ordered for them, and did not join in any of the flurry and excitement.

They were all sorry about Keith, but after all it was Christmas Eve; they were going to the pantomime, and for Christine at least there was the added excitement of smuggling Wisp into the box! She had not told any one of her plan, not even Victoria who seemed just then unapproachable. How lovely she was, this cousin from India, in the black velvet frock which had been made for her at her mother's request. How like a tragic princess she looked with her brown hair falling in thick smooth masses way down each side of her face.

The chicken and force meat, as Mrs. Mink called the stuffing, were delicious, even if they were disappointed about Keith. The trifle, a toothsome mixture of macaroons and fruit and cream, was also much appreciated, though Joan glanced a little apologetically at her sister as she took her second helping. Victoria herself scarcely ate at all.

Christine felt excited as their cab drew up in front of the Gaiety. Had Foggy forgotten to deliver the note? No, there she was, standing close to the door and yet well in the shadow. It would have been difficult for any one but Christine to have seen her at all, so small and thin was she, so drab and gray amongst the crowd. She was at Christine's elbow as she came to the entrance. Miss Peck and the girls were a little ahead, and Patrick with the box ticket held out importantly had gone first of all.

Christine spoke hurriedly: "You must keep just as close as possible and when we're in the box, keep well in the shadow," she said softly.

Wisp nodded, too overcome to speak, both at the possible wonder that lay before her and at the sight of Christine in her blue cloak with its wide swans-down collar. When they came to the ticket man Christine waited an instant until the others were through and then drawing Wisp's arm through hers she went on quickly inside. The ticket man was very busy. There were many people and he had not noticed!

Everything was in their favor. Christine had said at dinner that she wanted to sit at the back of the box and so she took one of the red velvet-covered chairs in the shadow of the background and Wisp knelt swiftly and silently behind her, yet where she could easily see the stage. The box was ill-lighted, and almost as soon as they had taken their seats the whole theater was in darkness, the curtain went up, and the fun began.

The pantomime was *Cinderella,* and it was beautiful and funny. Wisp sat like a child in a dream, her hands folded tightly in her lap. She laughed softly at the jokes, but no one heard her, for every one else was laughing too. She listened entranced to Cinderella's sad little song as she sat alone in the ashes and she drew her hand across her eyes when the song was over.

Christine was not the only one who had brought

an unexpected addition to the box party. Just before they had left, Patrick had whispered with a low hiss to Joan: "Put Blighty under your cloak and bring him along. It will be fun to have him and I'm afraid to leave him home for he's so clever he might try to run away again!"

Joan had nodded excitedly, and so clinging close to her, under her cloak, Blighty had come to the pantomime. For the first part of the first act he sat quietly on Joan's lap, but gradually crept cautiously over to the velvet railing of the box and from that vantage point watched the glitter and color on the stage and, until the curtain went down, only Joan and Patrick and Christine knew that he was there!

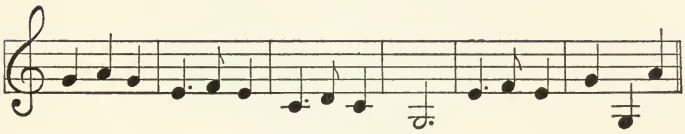
The funny man was funnier than ever. Dublin children, who had gone to the pantomime so often it was a very old story, looked at each other as they laughed that night and whispered, "He's the funniest one we've ever seen!"

The curtain went down on a rain of applause. Wisp shrank back behind the thick velvet hangings at the far end of the box and the lights blazed forth!

But the funny man was so popular they had to call him out once again. Even Victoria clapped vigorously and it was all that Wisp could do not to clap herself. Up went the curtain again, the lights blazing and the orchestra playing a new tune. All about the funny man was the glitter and color and wonder of the stage and in the center he stood smiling. Then

he said he wondered if any of them knew how to spell *Woollomoolo-o!*

He asked them all to join in and try to sing it with him. First of all he waved his hand imperiously to the orchestra leader who in turn waved his baton and they struck up this tune:



It was irresistible! The funny man need have had no fear that the audience would not aid him in spelling the funny word *Woollomoolo-o* in time to the easy swinging tune that the orchestra played. All the children sang lustily and some of the grown-ups. Even Miss Peck found herself humming the words. Wisp sang with the others, but when the funny man had disappeared for the last time and the lights blazed brighter than ever she shrank back almost behind the red velvet curtain and at that moment Keith appeared in the doorway of the box!

For the first second the only ones that saw him were Christine and Wisp and the only one he saw was Wisp! His eyes rested on her for a moment in utter amazement as she sat way back in the shadow, her jacket unloosened at the throat show-

ing her shabby gray dress, her small eager face white with excitement. Then his eyes caught Christine's imploring glance which seemed so plainly to say, "Don't tell!"

IX.—Auntie Moneypenny Turns Comforter

It was such a surprise, this sudden appearance of Keith, that for a moment no one knew what to say. Miss Peck found her voice first of all and after Joan's exclamation, "It's Keith," was the first to pour forth a torrent of questions:

"My dear Keith, what does this mean? How is it possible that you came, after all? Have you just come on the evening boat, and if so why weren't you in time for dinner?"

Miss Peck was always confused by the happening of anything out of the ordinary and she was for the moment rather flurried in her effort to make out the situation. It was a good thing that she did talk, for it gave the others a little time in which to subdue their emotions. It was three years since his sisters

and Patrick had seen Keith, but except for Joan they did not appear to be excited as they really were. Keith was the most self-possessed of them all. He said, "Hello, everybody," and answered Miss Peck's questions easily, explaining his appearance.

"So that stupid Perkins sent the wire, after all. He's a dunderhead and always making mistakes. He's Uncle James's butler. There was some talk of my staying over, but I persuaded Uncle James that I'd better keep to the first plan."

"The wire," put in Victoria, leaning forward and speaking quickly and excitedly now, "it was so dreadful having it come this afternoon and made us so unhappy!"

"That was the fault of old blockheaded Perkins, I tell you. He had a number of wires to send for Uncle James and muddled them up!" Keith answered her.

As he spoke he glanced from one to the other of them and when Joan gave up her seat next Victoria to him, he sat down by his twin sister, who could not seem to realize that he had really arrived after her disappointment of the afternoon.

The governess did not yet understand his non-appearance at dinner, but before she could ask him again about it Patrick said, coming over and standing by his brother in his eagerness and excitement at his unexpected arrival: "We had a ripping dinner and Vic wouldn't eat any of it because you didn't come!" Patrick liked to use some of the slang he had picked

up on the boat coming over. He wanted Keith to see that he was something of a man.

"Well, to tell you the truth I met up with the brother of a boy I know at school, on the boat. He's been in the trenches for three weeks and he's home on a few days' leave. He had to take a train for Wexford at eight and wanted me to dine with him."

"You should have brought him along with you," put in Beryl, who was almost as excited as Patrick at the arrival of her cousin.

"I did suggest it, but he wouldn't have time to do that and make his train. He's a lucky beggar. He's really doing something for his country." As he spoke Keith frowned and looked restlessly over the audience which was waiting for the going up of the curtain for the second act.

Just at that moment the lights were lowered and as darkness fell and the others were eagerly watching the stage, Wisp crept quietly out of the box, ran quickly down the flight of softly carpeted stairs just outside, and was at the door leading to the lobby before she knew it.

She hesitated for a moment fearful that the ticket collector would see her and then like a gray flash she was out in the lobby, across it, and standing in the midst of the wintry windy night. Then she began to run and she did not stop until she reached the dark confines of Jeffers Court. She sat down for a moment on the first step of the lowest flight leading up to her own abode, and buried her face in her hands.

She was thinking of the look in Keith's eyes when he had seen her there hiding in the corner of the box; a look of astonishment and disgust which seemed to say, "What can this shabby little girl have to do here in the Christmas party box with my sisters and cousins?" Poor Wisp was so sensitive that she imagined many other things that the look might have said such as: "What an odd idea, tying one's shoes with cord. What strange hair. She must have cut it with a saw!" For some time she sat there on the lower step in the cold thinking of things the look might have said and of course all of this was foolish.

When she did go on up the stairs she stopped at a door on the floor below Fairy Cottage and pushing it gently open a little way said softly, "Auntie Moneypenny, 'tis me, Kathleen!" The cracked voice answered her, "Come on in then with ye," and Wisp came in closing the door after her.

"I'm after comin' back before it's over," she explained.

Now auntie was very much surprised to see her little friend, having thought of her as enjoying the pantomime. She had waited anxiously after Wisp had gone, fearing that after all the little young lady from Fitzwilliam Square had not been able to take Wisp into the box, but as time went on and she did not return, auntie was full of joy for Wisp. She was wise enough not to make any comment now that the child had evidently stayed for a little and

then come back. She knew that in her own way when she was ready to do so, Wisp would tell her.

"Come in then, aroon. I was just thinkin' o' a cup o' tea and what about the tin o' Jacob's biscuits!" As she spoke auntie hobbled over to a cupboard and opening its door brought out two cups and saucers, a small can of tea, and then, reaching in again, handed Wisp a brown teapot.

"There's good fresh water in the pail. Foggy was after a-bringin' o' it up to me to-night. I've the muffler done for him and a rare good green one it is!" Auntie busied herself in putting out the cups and saucers while Wisp put the kettle on to boil.

"Shure ye better not use the biscuits, auntie. They're grand, but they're near gone!" remonstrated Wisp as they drew up to the little table.

"Ain't it Christmas Eve? We've a right to a bit o' cheer, ain't we? I do be glad enough to see ye, for I've been a-thinkin' a bit o' all the days gone by." This was canny of Auntie Moneypenny, for she wanted her friend to feel that she was helping her in coming back and she was afraid that already she might be regretting having left the theater.

"It was grand, I suppose, what you was after seein'. Nice music maybe. I saw a pantomime once or twice in me day, but never was I after gettin' an invitation from the gentry. Ye saw some o' the play?"

Wisp smiled uncertainly as she answered, "Yes, auntie, the whole first act."

She sat looking across at the old woman in the

shawl and although she loved her, for the moment she scarcely saw her. She was seeing again the magic of the moment when first Fairy Godmother appeared, but the delight of her thought was for just that brief instant as Auntie Moneypenny broke in with a question:

"What was they all after wearin'?"

"Miss Christine had a blue dress and a coat the same color. It had fur like white kitten all 'round the top o' it. She looked like an angel!"

How Christine would have enjoyed hearing herself called an angel by Wisp!

"Miss Beryl, she wore pink and her cheeks was red as apples. The strange young lady from India was all in black, but it was awful pretty. She has grand hair fallin' over her shoulders. She looked cross like and kind o' hungry."

Victoria would not have relished this description of herself!

"The little lady, Miss Joan, was fun to look at and Master Patrick's a fine wan. Miss Christine, she whispered to me goin' up the stairs that Miss Joan was after bringin' the monkey, but I didn't see him," she spoke regretfully.

Auntie Moneypenny knew very well that it was too early for the pantomime to be over, but she wisely said nothing, only nodding her head with interest, as she listened.

Suddenly Wisp stood up and coming up to her friend put her hand on her arm.

"'Twas at the end o' the act, auntie. Mr. Keith came sudden like and he saw me kneelin' there on the floor by the curtain, just like I am, all shabby and me hair flyin' like it does and me jacket sleeve all tore. Shure, I mended it once to-day wid a bid o' red cotton you was after givin' me, but it tore out again. He saw it; yes, I know he did! He looked queer like he was so surprised and why shouldn't he be? Ain't I just awful lookin', auntie? If you was a rich lady would you be after wantin' your children to be a-knowin' of me?"

Auntie Moneypenny gazed at her for a moment in utter astonishment, and then she knew why it was that Wisp had run away from the pantomime.

"Know ye?" she queried, her voice going higher and higher in her excitement. "Know ye?" she repeated. "Listen to me then," she leaned forward impressively as she spoke. "If I was the queen o' this whole island and any one came to me and says, 'Who's the best gal to be playmate to me children?' —maybe a duchess would be after askin' me or some grand lady-in-waitin'—what answer would I be after givin'? I'd say to them, 'There be many fine girls in this blessed land, but look through the whole length and breadth and ye'll not find one as can touch Kathleen Magillicuddy!' "

Wisp could not help but laugh at auntie's funny way of comforting her, but as she sat there with her old friend close to the faint warmth of the stove, enjoying the very hot tea and the very good Jacob's

biscuits which the visiting nurse lady had brought to Auntie Moneypenny, she began to feel better. It was Christmas Eve as auntie had said and they must make cheer. Auntie was glad that she had come home. How strange it must be to be all alone, the last of a big family, with only the sweet sad memories to keep one company, memories of long-ago days and friends, of turf fires and Christmas carols and lighted candles in low rude windows!

Auntie was so very old that it was hard to believe she had not lived forever! I doubt if she really could have told exactly herself just what her age might be. When any one asked her, as they often did at Jeffers Court, she would answer, "I was born some time before the Big Wind," and she dated almost everything either before or after that episode which was a huge cyclone that did much damage in Ireland many years ago. Auntie could tell strange things about fairies and doings in the old days, but she would not do so very often, and only Wisp and Foggy and Peg knew her wonderful stories.

To-night her one thought was to bring a smile to the face of Wisp and so she talked on in her thin, shrill voice, telling of this and that. Finally she said craftily, "Whoever would have been a-thinkin' you'd be asked by the young lady to go to the pantomime? She must have wanted yer company bad enough! Some folks needs grand do-dads to make people take to 'em, others is so smart and good-spirited they gits friends no matter what they're after wearin'!"

Wisp's face lightened a little at this as auntie meant it should.

Meanwhile the pantomime progressed from one brilliance to another. Beryl had to admit to Christine afterward that pantomimes were far nicer than musical comedies. After the second act Keith and Victoria talked together in low tones, she telling him in her quick, low voice the news of the family in India. Christine in spite of her concern for Wisp could not help but be diverted by Blighty who refused to sit anywhere but on the edge of the box and although there was no harm in this, it caused so much excitement among the audience that it was embarrassing. On every side were whispers:

"See him! Isn't he funny? Fancy bringing a monkey to the pantomime!"

Some small boys whistled to him and in spite of remonstrances from parents came up to the side of the box and tried to pat him. In fact, so popular did he become that, on being asked what part of the evening they had enjoyed the most, numbers of small boys had answered, "The monkey!"

Miss Peck was annoyed and embarrassed, for their box was the center of all eyes and Blighty seemed in one of his most tantalizing moods. He called out once or twice making such an unearthly sound that every one laughed and it distracted their attention from the stage.

"It's a wonder they don't come and tell you to take the beggar home. If they do you'll have to go,

you know. Don't think you're going to spoil our fun. You can just call a cab and go back to the Square with your pet," Keith whispered teasingly to Patrick who was so impressed by this that he spoke very sternly to the monkey in Hindoostani and after a while he did quiet down.

They wanted to take outside cars home as Keith hadn't yet ridden in one, but Miss Peck said they were not warmly enough clad and no one wanted to hold Blighty on an outside car, especially as he was in such a hilarious mood.

When they reached home Christine and Victoria went upstairs where, on the couch in Victoria's room, lay Christine's presents for Wisp, and next them shining like a star was a filmy, rose-gold, shimmering Indian scarf.

"It's the most beautiful thing I have and so I want Wisp to have it," Victoria had said earlier in the day when she had showed it to her cousin.

"It's like all the things you dream about. Isn't it wonderful for some one who has never had anything lovely to have this?" Christine had answered.

They wrapped it in its tissue-paper covering, and at Christine's suggestion Victoria wrote on a Christmas card:

"From an unknown friend."

"That's just the thing to put on the card, for you really are unknown. You saw her teaching school but she doesn't know it," said Christine.

They put the parcel with the other presents and

then went downstairs. The others were all in the study and Keith was telling Beryl about a hockey match. She was smiling and interested and went off unwillingly when Miss Peck called her to ask her some question about a present. The study was trimmed with holly and Patrick and Keith had to put up some mistletoe. All that Patrick had done to help was to steady the ladder while Keith fastened the wonderful gray-green bunch under the chandelier. The mistletoe grew in their own garden. Beryl and Joan had picked it that morning.

It was lovely there in the great old room with its gleam of firelight, its holly, and its green festooning. It seemed touched with some of the peace and mirth and the joy of Christmas. On a chair by the fire were a pile of stockings, one for each of them, including Miss Peck. It was late, but there was much to be done, stockings to be hung, presents to be tied up, and cards to be written on.

"Fun being up so late and no one saying anything, isn't it, Paddy?" Joan whispered to Patrick, who nodded an affirmative.

It was just as she was leaving the room when everything was in readiness that Christine came face to face with Keith, the others having gone on. She had dreaded this, for she knew that he would demand an explanation of Wisp's presence.

"Well—what on earth did you have hidden away there in the box? Who was it, or rather what was it? I wasn't sure if it were a human or an elf, but

I do know its jacket was torn and that it needed to comb its hair!"

Christine flushed and answered indignantly: "You frightened her away. I know it. She is my dear friend."

X.—Christmas

Mrs. Mink was up betimes on Christmas morning and she made some crisp remarks to Cook when Hattie, the parlor maid, rang the breakfast gong for the third time.

"Such goin's on! Them children up till midnight laughing and callin' back and forth. Here it's well past nine o'clock and not one of them ready for breakfast, not even Miss Peck! A nice kind of governess she is. Spoilin' them the way she does!"

Mrs. Mink bustled angrily about the kitchen as she spoke. Cook took a freshly baked barmbrack from the oven and then eyed the housekeeper uneasily. Would she never go out of the kitchen! Cook did not think it needful to tell Mrs. Mink that

Christine had been downstairs early and had left a mysterious bundle and a note for Foggy, to be given to him when he came with his order from the butcher's. He was likely to arrive at any moment and Cook herself had baked an especially nice barm-brack for him. Fortunately there was the sound of voices and of people running downstairs and Mrs. Mink rushed on into the front of the house, a sharp scolding on her lips. Cook meanwhile dished up breakfast, her eye out for Foggy.

The housekeeper's scolding died on her lips, or rather was so modified that it did not sound more formidable than a mild rebuke. It was the presence of Keith that made the change. No one knew just why, but undoubtedly he seemed to inspire her with a certain respect. She even curtsied when Miss Peck said:

"This is Mr. Keith, Mrs. Mink. There was a mistake about the wire and he came, after all."

It was a happy breakfast, for every one was in holiday spirit and even Blighty seemed to feel that it was not just an ordinary meal. He sat on Patrick's shoulder and ate a bit of toast and jam carefully and meditatively. He did not like this peculiar kind of food particularly, but as every one seemed so friendly and evidently wanted him to join in the fun he was quite willing to go to any length that they chose to have him. Every one was determined not to be homesick, or if they were just the least little bit, not to show it. They had agreed to have the presents

late in the afternoon when the wire had come saying Keith would not be with them in the morning, but as he was there, it was decided to have all that part of the celebration at once.

After breakfast Christine went out to the kitchen and questioned Cook, who assured her that she had delivered the package safely to Foggy who had come while they were at breakfast.

"I baked up a loaf of the barmbrack for him whin I was a-doin' of the others, Miss Christine, and he was that pleased with it. He's a doat of a lad he is, with his round smiling face. I was after a-showin' him whin I took it out of the oven, all brown lookin'. Thin I wrapped it up in a good bit o' paper. He was that pleased!"

"You're sure he understood about the package, Cook? You see there's something for him inside it," said Christine.

Cook nodded. "He knows, miss, so don't you worry at all, at all. He was glad enough that ye thought o' his little friend you was after tellin' me of. He was better pleased about it than about the bit o' bread!" she answered.

Mrs. Mink bustled into the kitchen and Christine ran on into the front of the house and upstairs to the study where the others had already gathered. There was no fire in the big old fireplace because the stockings were hung from the mantel. They made an odd sight, for there was every shape and color among them. Patrick had borrowed a pair of Cook's

and they were large and of a peculiar shade of red. Patrick's stocking was very full indeed.

Mrs. Mink had taken a look in at the library before breakfast and had remarked to Cook, "What a waste of paper and ribbon!"

Cook was just as much in holiday spirit as any one and had answered briskly, "I'm glad they're able to enjoy the time o' year, for a nicer, more friendly set o' children I ain't seen in many a day!"

"They're spoiled, and if I had my way they'd be obeyin' rules, not bossin' all creation as Miss Beryl does. She'd like to be givin' her orders to me. Just let her try it, that's all," was the housekeeper's reply.

"Don't you think we'd better have dinner to-night and not in the middle of the day, Pecky?" Beryl had said. "You see we want to go to the service at Saint Patrick's in the afternoon and it will be more fun to have the real Christmas dinner after we come back!"

Miss Peck answered timidly, "Just as Mrs. Mink says, dear."

The housekeeper refused absolutely, but Cook came to the rescue.

"Bless 'em, sure it don't matter to me one way or the other. It's the time o' year when they can do as they please. It's a big pleasure to Miss Beryl to plan a bit and, glory be, I don't mind her. There ain't no Christmas for me but to cook and fuss a bit

for 'em. Himself was that fond o' me Christmas puddin' and now that he's gone it don't matter much one way or the other. He was good, was my man, and we was as happy as two children, him and me. He went awful quick; was took sudden like just this time o' year, five Christmases ago. I ain't no place to go gallivantin' off to. Dinner can be at midnight for all of me!" So Beryl's plan held good and Cook had the whole day to chop and bake and mix her goodies.

They had all said over and over that they only wanted the simplest kind of Christmas because of its being war time, and for that very reason perhaps they enjoyed the little things they had made for each other most of all. Victoria and Joan had brought their cousins each a sandalwood fan and a soft scarf of India silk. Beryl's was gold and Christine's was blue and silver. The girls were so delighted with them that they stopped in whatever else they were doing every little while and went over and looked at them.

It was great fun seeing the different ones discovering their presents, Miss Peck especially. She had such an odd assortment of gifts that she was bewildered. The girls from India had brought her an Oriental lounging robe and Patrick a small enamel elephant. Beryl had made her some handkerchiefs with shamrocks elaborately embroidered in the corners, and Christine, who sewed very badly, a case to put them in. She was quite overcome by all the

things that were showered upon her and very much pleased.

Beryl had made presents for every one in the house though she had hesitated about Mrs. Mink.

"You might make her one of those letter paper holders. You can do them quickly, they're pretty, and it will make her more good-natured over the holidays," Christine had suggested.

"I don't believe she ever writes letters," Beryl had objected, starting at once to make the letter paper holder, however. Mrs. Mink came in rather unwillingly with Cook and the maids, while the gift presenting was going on. They all watched to see how she would look when she opened her presents and every one was relieved to see that she seemed pleased. Yes, she did write a great many letters to her nieces in London. The letter paper holder and the stationery inside it and the pearl-handled pen holder from Miss Christine were just what she wanted. Cook, too, was delighted with a cross-stitch handkerchief made by Beryl and a sachet made by Christine. It was of pink satin and very fragrant, but it was of a more peculiar shape, resembling a turtle more than anything else, though no one was impolite enough to say so. She was also pleased with a box of Turkish Delight from the children from India. On the whole, in spite of wars and separations, they all managed to have a happy morning.

"It's all right if you don't think too much!" Vic-

toria said to Christine. They were standing together by the big chair which they shared for a place to put their gifts. As she spoke Victoria leaned over and picked up hers from Beryl. It was a camisole, daintily made of pale pink crêpe de chine and edged with narrow lace. There were French knots on the shoulder ribbons.

"Beryl is so clever," she said, holding the garment gently. It made them both think suddenly of the scarf and Christine said eagerly:

"Cook told me she gave the package to Foggy, and that she baked him a barn-brack. Oh, I wonder what Wisp thinks of the scarf, it is so heavenly. It's about the most beautiful thing that any one could have. A queen would be glad to own it—a Fairy Queen!"

A shout from the other end of the room made them run over to see what was going on. Patrick had just opened a strange-looking bundle and had drawn forth something which looked stranger still. It was his gift from Beryl and it proved to be a neat, red suit for Blighty and a funny little red cap to go with it. Patrick was delighted, and Keith said:

"All you need now, Paddy, is an organ grinder!"

Mrs. Mink showed her gratitude by going out and brewing them some of her very good chocolate.

They discussed their presents over the chocolate and Victoria read aloud bits of a letter from her mother that had come that morning, keeping the most intimate parts of it just for themselves.

"Ayah puts flowers in each one of your rooms every morning just as she has always put them in Keith's every day since he's been away from us at school," their mother wrote.

Victoria had not intended to read this part out loud, for she knew that her twin brother disliked anything that seemed to have sentiment about it. He went over to the window and stood there with his back to them for a few moments looking out.

"He's upset because she read that about Ayah. He writes her sometimes and he sends her presents, but he wouldn't like us to say anything about it. He's her favorite of all of us!" Joan whispered to Christine under cover of the general conversation.

"Isn't he tall and nice looking! Wouldn't he be splendid in a uniform?" Christine answered her.

Joan looked anxious and put her hand on her cousin's arm.

"Never say that to him, please. Father's had so much worry with him. His letters have been full of the war. He's only fifteen, of course. You know he's Vic's twin. He looks older and wants strangers to think he is. He doesn't like people to think that he and Vic are twins," she answered.

They decided to take an outside car to the cathedral and to walk back. They all went except Blighty who was locked in the study so he could not possibly run away. There was such a large party of them that they phoned for two cars, and even then it was a tight squeeze. Miss Peck remarked this as they

started off and the driver, an odd-looking individual in a long mud-colored coat and wide hat, turned around and joined in the conversation.

"Saints, miss, this ain't nothin'. Wait till toward spring and ye see them a-comin' in late Sunday afternoons from up the Dargle way. Ten on a side, I've seen with me own eyes, dear, though how they do it I couldn't be after tellin' ye!" he said to the governess, who answered stiffly:

"Indeed!" and held on to the side of the car as tightly as she could.

It was a nice outside car with two wheels, rubber-tired. There was a little bench-like seat which could hold three people comfortably on each side. They sat back to back, and the driver in front. He drove a frisky little horse and they all enjoyed the brisk drive to the cathedral.

How gray it was! How strange and dim and still, with a waiting silence that had in it something beautiful. They were early, due to Beryl's eager protestations that they would not be able to have seats if they were not there well in advance. The vast place filled slowly at first and then more rapidly. They sat in a row except for Christine and Victoria, who were just behind the others. They were well at the back and some one standing behind the last seats on their side of the cathedral saw them, some one who stood at the front of a crowd of those who had come in to hear the carols. It was Wisp. Peg was with her and the inevitable Dawson, but Tin was

absent. Wisp and Peg did not go to the same church as did most of the children at Jeffers Court. They seldom went to church at all, but they always came to hear the carols at the cathedral. Wisp's mother had been a Methodist and Peg's grandfather had been sexton in a fine Presbyterian church in the north. Peg's mother was very proud of telling of this and was given to saying that the family had all been grand and respectable as long as her father had lived.

The cathedral was below Cuff Street and a good distance, but it was in one of the poorest sections of the city and its grayness blended with the grayness all about it, its dimness with the mist-filled lane-like alleys all about it, but its spires caught the sunshine, and the wonder of its stained glass windows made a glory of color in the heart of the dreariness.

Wisp wore her old shawl under her jacket for it was very cold, and on her head she had a warm sky-blue wool tam-o'-shanter. Auntie Moneypenny had knitted it for her as soon as she was better from the rheumatism, earlier in the year. The visiting hospital lady had brought her the wool, the same one who had given her the Jacob's biscuits. She had presented it to her little friend that morning and it was very becoming to Wisp's shock of bright hair. Peg was gay in her red tam and they both had cloth gloves which Mrs. Casey had bought for them at a wonderful sale over at the Daisy market across the river. Wisp and Foggy and Auntie Moneypenny

had had dinner with the Caseys and Foggy had provided the meat, a small piece of pork. It had been a present to him from the butcher. Mrs. Casey had cooked it with greens and potatoes and had made herself a treacle pudding such as she had had as a girl. There had been no such meal in the Casey household for many a moon.

The music came suddenly, first a murmur of the organ and then a great wild jubilant melody that rose and rose and seemed to mingle with the winter sunshine that streamed through the high windows. Then the service began.

When "Church was over," as Patrick expressed it, they stayed in their seats at the request of Miss Peck, who greatly disliked crowds. They did not mind waiting, for there was so much to see and the music of the organ was so wonderful.

Peg complained that she was tired of standing but Wisp did not feel it at all. She was in a world of her own just then. The day had been so wonderful. First Foggy's "Merry Christmas" at the foot of the ladder. Then the unbelievable surprise of the Christmas package from Christine! She could not yet realize it at all. There was a puffy rose cushion and a rose bath mat which made an ideal rug for Fairy Cottage. There was a box of Indian Relish and a jar of peach jam, and last of all, something folded in soft paper wrappings, something as lovely as a rainbow, a dream, or a flower—the Indian scarf, and with it a card on which in Victoria's sharp,

delicate handwriting were the words, "Happy Christmas for Wisp from an unknown friend." Could anything have been more mysterious than that! Then she had taken around the few little gifts she had made for her Jeffers Court friends. She knew that Foggy had delivered her little gift. Suddenly in the midst of the service she saw her and the others, and touching Peg's arm she whispered, "That's Miss Christine as I was a-tellin' ye about." Wisp felt suddenly shy at the thought of seeing Christine.

Foggy had given her a tiny Christmas tree with a red candle on it which she had lit. As it sat there on her shelf it had made Fairy Cottage very Christmasy. She thought of it as she stood there in the cathedral. As soon as the service was over, she touched Peg's arm.

"We'll be goin' now," she whispered. They went out ahead of the crowd and found themselves in the midst of soft whiteness. It had begun to snow and a faint silver cover lay on the dinginess about the cathedral. They ran home in delight through a white world which not even the gloom of Jeffers Court could darken.

Victoria was silent from sheer rapture as they came out into the wonder of the snow, because except for seeing it on the high mountains in the far distance she had only imagined snow in her dreams.

They all agreed to walk home and it was strange

to find the gray old city through which they had driven an hour before suddenly touched with glittering white. It seemed, coming quietly and unexpectedly as it did, to be the loveliest Christmas gift of all.

Christine went into the kitchen when they reached home, and Cook, on seeing her, wiped her hands on a kitchen towel, straightened her apron, and went over to the shelf above the stove and, reaching up, took down a small object wrapped in brown paper.

"I'm askin' yer pardon, miss, for I forgot entirely that the lad Foggy was a-givin' o' me somethin' for ye!"

Christine felt at once that it was from Wisp. She did not open the little package until she had gone on through into the dining room. It was neatly done up and tied with a bit of red ribbon and inside was the white box that Wisp had purchased from the woman at Iveagh market. On top of it was a carefully cut piece of white paper on which was pasted a gold paper star under which was written:

"Miss Christine, with the wishes of Christmas, from Wisp."

Christine put the little box with the blue doves on the cover up to her face with a quick, loving gesture and then, holding it carefully, went on upstairs to show it to Victoria.

Miss Peck sat alone in the study after tea, a shawl about her shoulders. She had been thinking of her father and her quiet vicarage home, wonder-

ing if the cousin spending the winter with him would make him as comfortable as she had done. She would have liked above all things to have heard his simple sermon at the evening service in the little ivy-covered church that Christmas night, but she was used to wanting to do things that she could not do, and almost at once her thoughts drifted away from herself to the children. They had all seemed fairly happy. Christmas had been so far free from any outward sign of homesickness. Mrs. Langsley was right, Keith was the most difficult to know. She could see that already.

While Miss Peck sat there by the fire, thinking of the children, Keith came into the room. At first he did not see her as he went over to the window and stood looking out. When he turned and saw that she was there he came up to her and stood with one foot on the fender. It was evident that he wanted to say something and did not know how to begin.

"How pleased the girls and Patrick were about the snow. It's odd to realize that they've never seen it before," commented the governess.

"They've seen it high up on the mountains, but that isn't the same," he answered her. Then he turned, facing her, and she saw that he was frowning.

"Miss Peck, I want you to know that it is against my wishes that the children are here. Uncle James knows how I feel and so does father," he said to her. She was interested and surprised, but she found

it difficult not to smile at his saying "the children," for, after all, he was the same age as Victoria and Joan was not so very much younger.

"What do you mean, Keith?" she asked, glad that of his own accord he had spoken to her confidentially.

He kicked the fender for a moment thoughtfully and then he spoke with his usual blunt quietness.

"Father and Uncle James insist on treating me as if I hadn't any sense. They never listen seriously to anything I say. Uncle James and I had a long talk day before yesterday at his club at tea. He knows that if I'm alive next year I'll go out and fight. There is no use in their arguing. I shall go." He stopped and kicked the fender some more, staring gloomily into the fire.

Miss Peck wisely refrained from saying that because of his youth he would be refused by the government. Before they knew it they were deep in war talk, she telling of some of the letters she had had from Tommies to whom she had sent things, Keith listening with interest because it was the thing that interested him.

"I don't think it's going to be any too safe here for the children, but perhaps I'm wrong. Anyway, I'm glad you're with them, Miss Peck," he said.

They had quite a talk together there in the firelight and the governess was happy that Keith had confided in her and evidently liked her. They were friends all of a sudden and she felt as though to

have gained his liking was a big step toward lightening some of her responsibility.

Dinner was the most fun of all, for this time there were no gloomy faces as there had been the night before, and even Mrs. Mink was in good spirits. After some urging they persuaded her to join them at the table and so she did. She had on her best black dress and frilled cap and looked like a Dickens character.

Cook's turkey was beyond reproach, as were her mashed potatoes and vegetables. The plum pudding came in as brown and plump as could be and there was a tiny blue flame on the top of it and a sprig of holly. They laughed and told stories and jokes and no one seemed to enjoy it all more than Mrs. Mink herself. Christine stood up as the pudding was brought in, and holding up her glass of ginger ale, said:

"Here is a health to absent friends." And they all stood up and drank it, she and Beryl thinking of their soldier father in Salonica, the children from India of their far-away home and people, and Miss Peck and Mrs. Mink of quiet English villages and dear ones there.

Patrick, who was excited, called out, "Here's a health to every one!"

Just then on the clear night air came the sound of singing!

XI.—"Little Town of Bethlehem"

The sound was elusive; first it seemed far away somewhere in the white silence of the garden. Then the words came clearly and as they all crowded to the window looking out, Keith exclaimed, "There's some one by the hawthorn tree—see! There are two of them, and they're children."

Sure enough! They could see two small figures outlined against the dark tree.

"We must ask them in. That's what they always do in Ireland Christmas Eve," said Beryl, but already the two were moving toward the back of the house, and the carol came only faintly to the ears of the children by the window. As you may have guessed, the two singers were Wisp and Foggy, and if it had not been for Blighty it is probable that they would have disappeared as mysteriously as they came.

Blighty had been bored during dinner. No one seemed to pay any attention to him and he did not enter into the fun with his usual zest. He waited until the nuts were passed around and after helping himself generously, jumped noiselessly off Patrick's shoulder, and during the general hilarity attendant on dessert and especially the appearance of the plum pudding, he vanished through the open door into the kitchen and as Cook had left a window open, flashed on out to the window sill, caught hold of the ivy on the outer wall, and swung himself down on to something that was cold and soft and glistening, something that for the moment bewildered him. Then with a leap he sprang between two figures that were approaching him and nearly overthrowing the smaller of the two he bounded over a low, prickly, gleaming hedge and ran on wildly down to the far end of the garden.

After him ran the two figures that had so startled him. They dodged in and out of bushes, laughing happily in the clear air.

The children watched the chase from the window and Patrick would have rushed on out, regardless of his coat, had not Keith caught him and forced it on him. The others laughingly threw on capes and coats, whatever they could find in the musty old cupboard under the stairs, and regardless of Miss Peck's call of, "Galoshes. None of you have on your galoshes!" They all rushed on out of the

French window off the dining room and joined in the chase.

The quiet, dreaming garden was transformed. A moment or so before there had been just the snow-covered paths and sparkling hedges under the blazing Christmas sky. Now there was laughter, calling back and forth, and running feet.

Blighty enjoyed the chase as much as any one. He decided that as soon as he was tired he would climb up to a branch of the tall, thin tree where he had taken refuge before from Patrick and Foggy, but all in good time! At present they were all out for a lark and he meant that they should enjoy it. He dived under bushes, whirled around and around tantalizingly and swayed up on to a wall where next summer peaches would be sunning themselves in their white paper coverings. He jabbered impudently at his pursuers.

It was Wisp who caught him and held him gently but firmly against her jacket—Wisp, whose tam had blown off and whose hair was a wild red-gold glory about her face.

The carols had been Foggy's idea. The two friends had had tea with Auntie Moneypenny and she had told them of the Christmas Eve of her youth which seemed to the two children who listened to be a time as long ago as the Middle Ages.

"We lived a good six miles beyond Inniskerry and we used to walk in all the way, carrying our lighted

candles, and many was the holy song we sung outside the doors o' those we knew in the village," she had said, and her remark had given Foggy his idea. He and Wisp knew some carols, especially *The First Noel;* all the children at Jeffers Court knew that one.

Wisp had said she would so love to see the garden at 50 Fitzwilliam Square. "I'd like to be 'round near 'em without their a-knowin' of it," she had said. Well, they would go, the two of them. Didn't he know the way outside into the garden? They would sing a carol under the windows and then they would go away and they would never know who it was that had cheered with a bit of song that Christmas Eve.

"Maybe they'll be after tellin' their grandchildren some time as how we come to their garden one Christmas Eve very long ago in Ireland and sung 'em a song there where it was all white with snow, and then was gone without ever their knowin' who it was," Wisp had said happily as the two had made their way through the wintry streets.

So it might have been but for Blighty's escapade. When Foggy saw the brown object leaping over the snow he could not resist the fun of running after him, just as he had done the other morning when Patrick had joined him. He changed from a carol singer to a monkey chaser in the twinkling of an eye and what could Wisp do but follow him!

It had been glorious fun running through the

garden and Wisp's face still shone with the delight of it as she stood with the monkey in her arms, all the children crowding about her. What a long, long garden it was! The dark, dignified house seemed so far away. Under the stars and with its unusual film of white it might have been the garden of The Snow Queen! This thought was with Wisp as she stood there among them all and she did not think *a* snow queen, but The Snow Queen, because she was a real person about whom she often thought when she was up in Fairy Cottage alone at night.

Wisp had felt so happy as she ran across the garden. What did it matter if she could not see those inside the house? She knew that they were there and had they not sent her tokens of their friendship that very morning? Now as she stood among them she was for the moment as one who has wakened suddenly from a dream. She had been so deep in her thoughts and fancies and it was difficult for her to realize that this had really happened, her being there in the garden with the children.

She had caught Blighty with one of her lightning springs and she held him easily, in fact he put his arms around her neck and clung to her as though suddenly fearful of the others.

"It's Wisp!" exclaimed Christine, running up to her and putting her arms around her, thereby embracing Blighty at the same time and receiving a tap of his paw by way of greeting.

Patrick began at once to scold his pet.

"You spoil everything. You always run away just when we're having the most fun!" He tried to speak severely, but as a matter of fact he had enjoyed the chase enormously.

"He hasn't spoiled everything at all. He's helped us to find Wisp," said Victoria, and the tone of her voice was so different from her usual listless drawl that they all turned and looked at her. She had on her black velvet winter coat and like the others had rushed out without a hat. Her soft hair fell about her shoulders and there was brightness and color in her face, and a happiness about her. Even her little brother noticed it, and said:

"Vic's standing up for Blighty. Oh ho, Vic! You said he was a miserable little beast yesterday," Patrick jumped gleefully around, making dives at Blighty, who pretended to be frightened and clung all the closer to his captor.

"Come inside, you and Foggy. Come in and see our gifts," exclaimed Christine, and they all started across the garden together, Wisp still carrying the monkey and Patrick still urging him to come to his shoulder. Christine put her arm around Wisp's waist as she used to walk with her special friend at school in America, and on the other side was Victoria, with Beryl and Keith and Foggy just behind them.

"I want to thank you for the dear little box. I'm going to have it on my dressing table as long as I live and I'm going to keep my little pearl cross and

seal ring in it," Christine whispered to Wisp as they walked toward the house.

"It ain't me that should be thanked. Oh, Miss Christine, how can I be after tellin' ye what ye've done for me? The peace and joy in me heart this day. Fairy Cottage like a fine little house with it havin' a carpet the color of a rose, and then the scarf!"

Wisp caught her breath as though words failed her. She had no time to say more, for they had reached the steps which led up to the little balcony off the dining room. Miss Peck stood at the window peering out at them. There was a warm, red, welcoming glow from the room and they could see the leaping flames of a royal fire in the splendid big fireplace.

Beryl spoke hospitably to Foggy.

"You must come in and have some of our fun," she urged.

"Yes, come along, Fog," shouted Patrick, who was very much excited over the events of the day. "Come in and see my new cricket bat from old Uncle James and, oh, everything!"

Wisp turned toward Christine.

"I don't think as how we'd better, thank you, Miss Christine. We—it was just to sing a carol for ye that we come," she said.

"Do come in! We want you to come, we do really! We want it very much." Victoria touched Wisp's arm as she spoke. "Come," she said gently.

Wisp came into the house on Fitzwilliam Square at last. She was a little bewildered just at first by the lights. At Jeffers Court there were only dim flickers at night and during the day the sunshine was very shy. It would creep in a little way, but then as though it were suddenly frightened it would steal off somewhere else. Wisp had often whispered to it, begging it to stay. Here in this big house there were lights everywhere. The chandelier above the dining-room table glittered like a thousand diamonds.

They all came in through the window, and before they were well inside the room Miss Peck lamented over them.

"Dear me, dear me, what ever will happen I wonder? All of you out in the snow in thin boots and no hats, and Patrick with his weak chest!"

She could not resist their high spirits, however, and laughed over their story of Blighty's antics in the garden. Christine pushed Wisp forward gently, saying to the governess, "This is the friend I made in Saint Stephen's Green, Pecky dear."

Miss Peck smiled kindly and said, "You came to give us a Christmas carol, did you, dear? Well, it reminded me, hearing *Noel* under the window, of the many times I've heard it just that way at home. Our village children love the carols, and of course they always knew that the vicarage was the place where they would be most welcome."

"Here's Foggy Moyne, Miss Peck. He brings our meat and he can whistle better than Keith or

anybody." This from Patrick, who felt more or less responsible for his friend.

Foggy's eyes were more wide open than ever. He twirled his cap around and around, but his face beamed when Miss Peck said cordially, "What a nice voice you have! We want to thank you for your singing, and now won't you have something Christmasy to eat? What do you think they would like best to have, children?" She turned smilingly toward the others as she spoke.

"Everything! They must have everything," shouted Patrick.

"Capital idea," put in Keith. He spoke a little stiffly, but he wanted to seem hospitable and he was beginning to feel almost as Christmasy as the others.

Cook had seen them come in, from a crack in the dining-room door, and while they had all been talking together she had been heating things over the stove, and the first thing they knew she appeared with turkey and other goodies and Wisp and Foggy were bidden to partake of them. Victoria and Christine sat down at the table with them and Beryl and Keith went back and forth from the dining room to the library.

"Let's play charades after they finish," suggested Beryl, passing the jelly to Foggy.

"Let's sing carols, all of us together," said Christine, and to the surprise of every one, Keith said:

"Yes, I say we do!"

Wisp was too excited to eat. She knew she would

be sorry the next day when she would remember the interesting food that she had never seen before and would most probably never see again, but she could scarcely swallow any of it, and when they saw that she was too happy or too shy to eat they did not press her to do so. Foggy on the contrary enjoyed it all to his heart's content and sampled a little of everything.

Cook was as interested in the unexpected guests as any one. Foggy was a prime favorite with her and she meant to see that he had a square meal for once in his life. She disappeared with the plum pudding and when she brought it in it had a blue flame on the top.

Foggy was delighted with the plum pudding, but found that, after all, he really only wanted a little of it for he had been very fond of the turkey. Wisp scarcely touched hers but sat looking at the faint blue flame and at the prickly bit of holly that adorned it. She was wanting something very much, but she was too shy to say anything. She wanted with all her heart to take something home to Peg and Tin and Dawson.

A little later they all went into the library and there they found Miss Peck at the piano, looking through a hymnal. Another splendid fire was blazing away in the library fireplace and the room looked even more Christmasy than the dining room, because all the presents were scattered about among bright ribbons and pieces of tissue paper and tinsel.

They showed Wisp everything and told her from whom came the different gifts. Foggy was interested in the cricket bat and seemed more at home with Patrick, in his corner of the room. Wisp sensed it all and stowed it away to dream over in Fairy Cottage: The large book-lined room, the soft rugs, the velvet hangings at the long windows; holly and mistletoe and lights and color. She had been in a dream of white and silver in the garden and now it was a dream of crimson and gold, and all about her was love and good-fellowship.

She wanted to thank Victoria for the shawl. She felt certain now that it was Victoria who had sent it, but she realized that Victoria would not be an easy person to thank.

Miss Peck turned around at the piano. "Well, we are going to sing some carols I hope," she said.

It was some little time before they all finally congregated about the piano. Patrick found something wrong with his imitation moving picture machine, a small affair sent by an aunt in Yorkshire whom he had never seen, and Foggy quite skillfully made it right. Beryl had run out to the kitchen to thank Cook again for all the pains she had taken with dinner and to agree with her that it was a blessed thing that Mrs. Mink had a girlhood friend in Glasnevin and spent holidays with her.

At last they all gathered around Miss Peck at the piano, Keith a little behind the others, wondering what the third-floor dormitory would say if they

could see him singing hymns with the children, but not minding about it half as much as he would have thought he must.

Adeste Fideles had a fine swing and a glorious melody and they enjoyed singing it so much that Miss Peck played the last verse over again. She was far happier than she had been all day. This was Christmas carols and children's voices. This was what she had been missing, playing for them all to sing. It was like home, like the many times she had played in the little arched-roofed church at home and the village choir had sung this same old hymn.

Patrick sang lustily, waving his hand a little to keep time. Miss Peck put her arm around his shoulder when they had finished one of the carols. Then she turned and looked at Wisp.

"Don't you and your friend want to come nearer so you can see the words? This one is my favorite of all and I want to hear your voices."

Wisp came close to her, leaning a little forward, studying the page. She told Foggy afterward that she never knew whether she sang the words or they sang themselves, so great was their beauty. She forgot that they did not speak like the other children, that they might stumble over the words; she forgot everything but the joy at her heart.

They sang, all of them, even Keith. Cook and Hattie, the parlor maid, standing in the doorway, hummed the melody although they did not know the words.

"Oh, little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night."

There was silence in the room for a minute after they had finished. Miss Peck closed the book and stood up and somewhere a clock struck eleven. Foggy spoke to her:

"Thank you, ma'am. We've had a grand evenin'. We must be goin' now."

Keith whispered to Beryl, "Why don't you do up something for them to take home to their kid friends?"

Beryl nodded. "Why, of course, we'll just do up a little parcel of fruit and some of the war cake and send along the box of chocolates you brought over from Uncle James. We've had enough sweets. I'll fix a nice box for them right away," she answered in her energetic way, and so when Wisp and Foggy went out into the night, they took with them some of the Christmas cheer.

Just before she went to sleep that night Wisp looked out of her window up to the sky. "Dear Star, I'm happy. I want to tell you that I've spent this Christmas just as you would wish me to," she said.

XII.—Nina and a New Plan

The fact that Keith was enjoying his holidays may be judged by a letter which he wrote to an Eton friend, at the end of the first week of his sojourn in Dublin.

50 Fitzwilliam Square,
Dublin, Ireland.
Dec. 31, 1915.

Hello, Screw!

Thanks for watch fob. It's no end swagger. Thanks awfully for asking me home to your place for the last week of hols but I've got to look after the kids a bit longer over here. Better luck later on.

My train gets in a half hour ahead of yours. Bring tuck along with you. Hurrah for grilled sausages at five o'clock on the 7th!

Langsley.

Beryl said afterward that the two weeks of the holidays were the most peaceful ones of the winter, and she was right. They were not the most fascinating or eventful, but there was no doubt that they were the least disturbing.

"Do you think it was at all interesting, meeting Nina?" Christine had asked her when she had made this remark.

"Goodness, no! Nina isn't the least bit interesting. She has absolutely no get-up and get," answered Beryl, using the homely old New England expression with vigor. "She's our friend now. I mean we've accepted her as a friend more through pity than anything else, but it's too bad she's so utterly unoriginal and meek. Will you ever forget the New Year's party?"

Beryl laughed as she finished speaking and although Christine groaned and answered, "Never!" she went on slowly, thinking over their funny New Year's Eve, "I don't know! It was ever so different, anyway. It was the kind of house you read about in old-fashioned books!"

The New Year's Eve party had come about in this wise. A note had come to Miss Peck from Uncle James's friend, Mrs. Witheringhaugh. It was a very formal note asking them each and all to come to spend New Year's Eve at her home. Her niece, Nina, would be glad to welcome them. Miss Peck herself had not gone to the party, but had seen them all off in a cab with Keith to look after

them. They had all worn their best clothes and were looking forward to a festive time.

Miss Peck had heard about the party from each one of her various charges. There was nothing about the monotonous evening that she did not know. Beryl had been the most vehement in her account.

"It was awful, Pecky! The dullest time I've ever had. There was no one there but ourselves and the niece. The drawing-room was the coldest, most unhomelike room; the fire didn't warm it at all. We just sat around and Mrs. Witheringhaugh sat there with us all the time. She talked a great deal to Keith and he was awfully stiff. She asked him questions about school and he blushed the way he does sometimes and just said 'Yes' and 'No' to everything. Whenever Mrs. W. looked the other way he glared across at Victoria and said, 'Let's clear out,—not out loud, you know, but we knew what he meant! We had tea and thin bread and butter and seed cake for refreshments. They have a fat old puppy that snaps at every one, even Nina!"

Christine's version was more cheerful:

"It was funny, of course, Pecky, sort of like something out of a story. Mrs. Witheringhaugh is the biggest, solemnest person I ever saw. She means well, but she simply doesn't understand. She suggested playing dumb crambo but no one seemed to want to. The seed cake was delicious and there

was cream with the tea that was so thick it was sort of golden colored. I wasn't a bit bored myself. The grounds were so dark and mysterious, and do you know, Pecky, it's the oddest thing, but just beyond them is sort of wild, open country. I saw it from the upper windows, and Nina says it's called the Rocky Valley. It was dark and dim, late in the afternoon; I could only see a sort of open stretch of land which looked as though it must be far from anywhere and yet it was so near us. If I'm not mistaken we'll think more about the Rocky Valley when spring comes along!"

Christine broached the subject of the Rocky Valley the next afternoon at tea at Mitchell's. During those vacation days they generally planned some fun for every afternoon, ending up with tea at their favorite tea shop, and that was Mitchell's. It is a low-ceilinged, narrow place beloved by Dublin people, and by county families up for a few weeks' change. People used to wide gardens and open stretches of country when talking over a prospective visit to the city would say: "We'll have tea at Mitchell's, of course. It's the only tea shop in Dublin!" This isn't true, of course. They only meant that they liked it best of all.

"What do you suppose there is about Mitchell's that makes people always want to come here?" Beryl asked them as they sat, all of them, around a table at the tea shop, after a visit to the Zoo.

"The hot buttered toast," Keith answered her,

passing the plate to Miss Peck, who was rather tired after piloting them about.

Keith had not gone with them to the Zoo. He had lunched at Jammet's, a delightful restaurant, with the soldier brother of his school friend, and had then done a little "sightseeing" on his own, meeting them at Mitchell's at five. Nina Witheringhaugh was there among them, a small, lanky, pale-faced girl of fourteen. She had a sharp nose and sandy eyelashes and a funny chirpy voice. They had taken her into their midst because they felt sorry for the dull, lonely life she led, but they were beginning to like her for herself. This afternoon she had on a neat raincoat and a very unbecoming flappy hat.

She wasn't quite sure that it could be right to be having such a good time. She had not been so happy in all her life before. "They used to have nice little puffs filled with whipped cream and big cakes made in the shape of cauliflowers before the war," chirped Nina, and then seeing Keith looking at her, stopped speaking as suddenly as she had begun. Keith was so big and serious looking and impressive. He did ample justice to the tea and toasted war bread, but when he was not eating he sat looking straight before him. He had not noticed Nina at all, had not heard what she had said.

He had been spending an hour roaming about Christ Church Cathedral. He had scoffed at the idea of sightseeing when suggested by Miss Peck,

but he had enjoyed the hour alone there in the dim old cathedral. Old! Why, it was so old, that crypt where he had been for the past hour, that it breathed a million secrets, and because some of them were secrets of famous warriors it had held Keith with a charm that still surrounded him and that took his thoughts very far away from a tea shop in the twentieth century. No one suspected this and except for seeming a little more preoccupied than usual, he was the same Keith they had known that morning.

Strongbow! He had been a soldier. He had not let youth stand in his way. He had not been tied to the apron strings of a governess and a pack of children. Keith ate his fourth piece of toast, unmindful of the chatter going on about him.

Richard de Clare Strongbow! He had seen his tomb there in the dark crypt, a crypt as old as time, older far than the stately cathedral built above it. He had seen the tomb of a soldier, one who had marched at the head of his knights and men-at-arms and archers!

"Christine says your aunt's house is like the house of Griselda's great-aunts in 'The Cuckoo Clock,'" remarked Patrick to Nina as the tea progressed.

Keith did hear this and scowled at his brother, and Joan kicked him gently, under the table. Christine put in hastily:

"I meant that it's old-timey and different, and that it has curios in the drawing-room as there were in the house of Griselda's great-aunts. It was a

fascinating place and very strange things happened in it."

"Pooh! It was only a fairy-story house," scoffed Patrick.

"Well, our house isn't. It's hateful. It's the stuffiest, primmest, most disagreeable house on earth, and nothing fascinating could ever and ever happen in it!" burst out Nina, and she was so in earnest about what she said that she forgot her awe of Keith and everything else and right there at tea at Mitchell's spoke out some of the emotion that she had kept to herself for so long; and none of them knew what a relief it was to her to speak out. They were all so used to saying anything they chose.

"You don't know how often I've wished it at the bottom of the Red Sea. It's been lessons and walks, walks and lessons. Fat old squint-eyed Beauty, the poodle and aunt, and governesses coming by the day and no one to play with! Poor aunt has asked children out to see me, but the house is so sort of gloomy and they almost never came again. I was always so shy until I knew you all, but this last week I've been so happy! Oh, you've been so good to let me go about with you. You will come again to Hawk House, won't you?" She looked pleadingly from one to the other of them and they all answered that they would, of course, all except Keith, who muttered something that might be taken for yes or no. He was annoyed, for he could not imagine how any one could come out and express their emotions

in a public place. He could not see how they could express them anyway. It was beyond his understanding.

Aunt Witheringhaugh's maid came for Nina in an old-fashioned coupé drawn by a fat horse which was driven by a disdainful-looking coachman. She waved good-by from the cab window, gazing after them as though she could not bear to see the last of them.

"There's no use in talking, we must do all we can for Nina. She needs us and it's our duty to see that she has a different sort of life. It's got to be done. We must just let her see what a good time is and that she must learn to think for herself and not be bamboozled by the aunt," Beryl said firmly as they all walked up Grafton Street toward home.

It seemed quite enticing, put this way. She was a problem, a duty, and as they talked it over they decided that it would be fun.

"We can think of her as a princess who is shut up in a dreary castle, with an ogress watching over her," suggested Christine, who was immediately set upon by Beryl.

"There you go again, Christine, talking as though you were six!" she exclaimed, and they all laughed, even Keith, but Christine did not mind.

They continued the talk about Nina as they sat about the library table that same evening. Keith was deep in a book. He was frowning and absorbed. It was his Latin lesson for the first day of school

which would be the day after to-morrow. He was leaving on the afternoon boat the next day. He had had a good deal of trouble over his Latin the last term and had meant to go over some of the back part thoroughly and to know the new lesson perfectly, and here it was the last night of his stay in Dublin and he had not so much as opened a book.

"Mrs. Witheringhaugh came to see me yesterday when you were all out. She wanted to know if it would be possible to make some arrangement so that her niece could have lessons with us!" Miss Peck smiled as she glanced from one to the other of them. "I said it would be agreeable as far as I was concerned, but that I would have to consult you all."

They all agreed that it was the only thing to be done and fitted in with the idea of cheering Nina up and giving her new interests, so Miss Peck said she would write to Nina's aunt that evening.

They all waved Keith good-by from Kingstown pier and watched the brilliantly lighted boat become, as soon as it left the dock, a dim bleakness that seemed to melt into the sea and sky. Victoria looked very much as she had the first evening when she and Joan and Patrick had arrived, and in spite of her knowing that Keith would not like it she could not resist throwing her arms around his neck and clinging to him. He patted her on the shoulder, saying: "There, there. Cut the weeping act," but

he did kiss her good-by and he said with evidently forced cheerfulness:

"Spring will be here before we know it. Then we'll all have some rare old times. How about it, old sport?" This last was addressed to Patrick, who with Blighty on his shoulder was looking a little solemn himself.

"I'll remind Miss Peck not to forget about the cake she promised to have sent for you," was Patrick's parting remark, and even as he waved good-by to them Keith frowned, though he could not help but smile. Miss Peck smiled, too, and it was evident that she would not forget the cake.

That night Christine stood alone at the library window, looking out. She was thinking of their new acquaintance with Nina and Nina's delight in knowing them, and as she thought about it a lump came to Christine's throat and tears to her eyes. Several of them rolled down her cheeks.

Nina was their friend, was to have lessons with them and more or less share their life. Ah! but Nina could not help them to find adventure. Nina could not even see the romance in living near a mysterious place like the Rocky Valley! She could never, never make the fairies seem near. Nina could come among them, but Wisp, like something elusive, shadowy, was just beyond them! Wisp was not one of them!

It was two weeks since Christmas Eve when they had all sung carols and when they had all seemed so

close together. Since then they had seen or heard nothing of Wisp except that Foggy had told Patrick in his cheery way that she was "As fit as a fiddle!" Christine had thought of Wisp and had wanted to see her, but she had let herself drift along with the others, enjoying herself from day to day as they did. She was thoroughly tired of holiday making and she wanted her friend more than she could say.

She knew, too, that Victoria had thought of Wisp because she had come to her a few days before and said, "The little girl of Jeffers Court, Wisp, we must not forget her!" And although neither of them had said so they had both known that they were waiting for Keith to go. Christine, as she stood by the window thinking of this, was ashamed of it. They had cared about what Keith would think and say. Christmas Eve they had all seemed so happy there about the piano singing carols. Keith himself had suggested that they send some Christmas cheer home to Wisp's friends, but that had been because it was Christmas Eve.

She had spoken to Miss Peck one day soon after Christmas about Wisp, had said just a little to the effect that she wanted to see her. Miss Peck had answered in her gentle way, "Yes, we really must do something for the child. She seems a bright little thing. Let us look over your clothes and see if there aren't some things that would do for her!" Miss Peck had meant to be kind, but she had not understood; no one understood but Victoria. It was

not just clothes that one could give to Wisp. It was love and friendship and companionship. Wisp herself could give in return so much of all that was lovely and different. As she stood there by the window Christine realized that a friendship with Wisp could not come easily, that it would mean courage and patience, and she resolved that come what might, she would be loyal and she would make a fight for Wisp to have the life that was hers just as much as it was theirs.

That night when they were all sitting by the fire in Victoria's and Joan's room, Christine voiced some of her thoughts that she had had by the window. Beryl was sitting on the rose fire cushion close to the fire and Joan on the bed brushing her short, stubby hair vigorously. Victoria made quite a picture in her soft red silk kimono, her long hair falling about her shoulders. She came over from the window and sat down beside Christine on the rug.

"I've been thinking about Wisp and I want you all to know that if she will have me I want to be her friend, I mean her real friend, not just see her once in a while, but often." After she had spoken Christine waited to hear what the others would say, brushing her own yellow locks meanwhile. She was sure that Victoria wanted to know Wisp, but the others, Beryl and Joan, would they understand? They did not know Wisp. She might seem to them just a very ragged, untidy, poor little girl whom one would be kind to, of course; a little girl who

lived in a slum tenement in the midst of poverty of the like they had never dreamed.

Beryl spoke before any one else had a chance:

"You are quaint, Christine! Why, the child would be scared to pieces. I mean, to come here and really know us. Mrs. Mink says Jeffers Court, where they live, she and the butcher boy, is one of the worst tenements in Dublin. You are so very young in some ways, Christine."

Victoria put in a word next, and Beryl was so astonished that she sat, hair brush in hand, gazing at her lovely cousin. Beryl did not know Victoria so well as yet and though she would not have admitted it, she admired her very much, and she had a great deal of respect for her opinion. Perhaps it was because Victoria was different from herself or from any of the American girls whom she knew. She was impressed deeply by Victoria's next words:

"I think you are wrong perhaps, Beryl. Wisp isn't just a tenement girl. She is different. Could you not see that? She has something—what is it? Something that is hard to describe. A few people in the world have it, very few. I do not know the word to describe it, but one that a little expresses; it is genius!"

Victoria half closed her eyes as she spoke, an odd way she had of doing and for a moment looked past Beryl as though trying to think how best she could explain to her what she meant.

"Foggy's a nice boy, too. He's so good to Patrick! He told him that he and Wisp had been friends since they were nine. He thinks Wisp is the brightest girl in the world," volunteered Joan.

"There wouldn't be any use in her doing lessons with us, because she wouldn't really know what they're about. She can read and write and she knows some arithmetic and geography. She told me so," mused Christine, glad indeed that Victoria was so absolutely on her side and delighted at the way she had spoken of Wisp.

"I know what we'll do! We'll teach her! She has a class at Jeffers Court, why shouldn't we have one here? We'll each teach her what we know and as I imagine we all know different things, she will really learn a good deal!"

"What do you mean? What class does she teach at Jeffers Court?" demanded Beryl. Victoria, after a look at Christine, told the two other girls about the visit to Wisp's abode, how she and Christine had stood in the shadow of Jeffers Court and listened to Wisp read the poem of the lamb.

Victoria could not have found a better way to arouse the girls' interest. Joan knew and loved the poem of the lamb and was all eagerness to hear about the funny class at Jeffers Court. Beryl did not want to be left out of anything, and finding that Christine and Victoria had had adventures that she knew nothing about, was ready enough to join in any that might be forthcoming. Moreover, the

idea of the school appealed to her and also that of having one at 50 Fitzwilliam Square.

They talked for some time and it was unanimously decided that Miss Peck and every one else of the household must be kept in ignorance of what they intended to do. The governess was a dear, but she would not understand. She would be glad to help Wisp, but she would not think that she could allow them to have a slum child as their intimate friend. She would feel that their parents would not think she was doing her duty by them. Grown-ups did not always understand.

"Mother would if she really knew Wisp. Mother would want us to do it, I know," said Victoria.

"Where can we go? Why, of course they'll find out the whole thing," said Joan.

Beryl shook her head.

"No they won't, Joan. They'll never know anything about it. There is a secret staircase and a secret room in this house and that is where we shall have our school for Wisp."

XIII.—Flowers and Jeffers Court

Wisp knew little of the doings of the children on the Square the two weeks following Christmas. Foggy would report all that he knew when he came home from the butcher shop late in the afternoon. He went every morning to the Fitzwilliam Square house, but it was not often that he saw any of the children, and if any it was always Patrick.

One morning, however, Christine had run into the kitchen and had caught him just as he had put his package of meat on the table and was turning away. She had asked for Wisp and had sent her her love.

At Jeffers Court things were not very cheerful, for so many people had bad colds. It was just as

though, now that the happy Christmas time was over, every one thought they must be miserable for a while. This was a stupid thing to think and you may be sure that Wisp was not one of the foolish thinkers. She was so busy that she had little time to think at all during the day, and at night when she did have time and would sit looking at the sky, she would weave the fancies that she so loved, and when she saw the star she would tell it things, but there were only a few nights during that fortnight that the star appeared.

Wisp had such quick feet and willing hands that she was wanted by her different friends at the Court to go on errands. When O'Sullivan Finney fell down one whole flight of stairs and broke his arm two days after Christmas, Wisp held his hand while the doctor set the arm, and she let O'Sullivan hold on to her just as hard as he could. She talked to him in school-mistressy tones and as he was quite in awe of her he behaved, on the whole, much better than any one who knew him at all would have expected.

One morning Foggy shouted up the ladder as he was starting off on his rounds.

"Mrs. Gruffy says as how Molly wants to see ye. She do be bad with a cold," he announced.

Wisp came out and sat on the ladder and talked for a moment with Foggy. It was toward the end of the second week and some of the joy she had felt in her heart since the Christmas Eve carol singing

had left her. She knew that it had not really gone for good. It could not do that. It was simply hiding around the corner and would peep out at her any moment.

"I've an idea of somethin' we'll be after doin' soon. I don't know why I haven't thought on it before. It's for ye and Peg to come for a ride in the butcher cart one day!" Foggy was so pleased with this idea that his round face beamed from ear to ear as it always did when he was in good spirits.

"Shure, and that will be fun, Foggy," Wisp answered heartily, not wanting him to think her down-hearted. She waved good-by to him as he went on down the stairs.

Wisp had no chance to go riding in the butcher's cart with Foggy for several days, because Molly Gruffy, when she went down to the next floor to see her, croaked out that she would not be able to sell her flowers for a few days, and if she liked, Wisp could do it for her and could have half the profits after the flowers had been paid for. Molly bought her flowers from the market and the market from a farmer, who raised them under glass during the winter months. Wisp was glad indeed to do as Molly wished. It was very seldom that a girl as young as she could have the opportunity, for the older ones were careful to keep the trade they had, and Wisp and Peg would not have had the money to buy flowers to sell no matter how much they may have wished to do so.

Wisp had gone errands for the small shop people on George's Street and had often earned an extra penny or so by carrying hurry parcels for the baker on the corner nearest the Court, but she had never before sold flowers in the street and her heart beat high with excitement as she stood on the corner of Dawson Street and the green, a tray of glowing beauty in her hands.

She was so used to going without a hat that she had forgotten her Christmas tam, and her hair flapped in gleaming brightness about her eager upturned face. The button which she had so painstakingly sewed on to her jacket had come off, and as usual it was held at the throat by the one faithful button that had done good service for a long time. Her jacket waved gayly behind her in the sharp wind. She had hurried to the market to buy her flowers, fearful that the best ones would be gone before she arrived, but it seemed as though they had waited for her, because to her they were so precious.

Roses, violets, pansies, button chrysanthemums! She would have liked to gloat over them quietly up in Fairy Cottage. She did not want to part with them for pennies, even though pennies were very good things to have!

"Roses, violets, pansies," she called out gayly and she had a smile for every customer. She was so little and so thin that she was almost hidden by her big tray of blossoms.

At noon she had sold all the violets and several bunches of bright red and gold chrysanthemums. She was beginning to be hungry, and now that the first excitement was over, a little tired, when suddenly at her side was a familiar voice:

"Ma sent this along to ye. She's home because of Tin bein' so bad with his cold. She ain't goin' to char till Saturday." Peg put a small package on the tray and surveyed the passers-by speculatively.

"Ain't that decent o' Mrs. Casey? Tell her so with my love. Ain't the flowers grand, Peg? Say, Peg, we'll be a-goin' out first thing there's a bit o' spring anywheres, won't we?" Wisp spoke very eagerly and her eyes seemed to shine through tears.

"Shure, we'll go! Do ye like it, Kathleen, sellin' the flowers?" asked Peg, never quite sure what her friend would feel about things.

Wisp was silent a moment thinking over the question. They sat down in a quiet doorway and Wisp began to eat slowly the lunch that Mrs. Casey had sent her. It was a piece of cold sausage between two thick slices of bread. The bread was tough and lumpy, but at best bread was not too appetizing in those war days, and for Jeffers Court people it was the worst of all.

Wisp enjoyed the sandwich because she was hungry. She ate it in a leisurely way, and she answered Peg before she finished it. First she shook her head. Then she said:

"No I don't, Peg, not to do steady. Oh, Peg,

Peg! do you mind last spring? Seems like I wake up every night now thinkin' spring's here, thinkin' o' the Rocky Valley and seein' the mist come up over the city and them baby forgit-me-nots we found last year." Wisp looked off across the swarms of fast moving people, the lorries and groups of soldiers, policemen at the trams, and motors and outside cars, all that made that busy corner of a city during the winter months of a war. "I do be fair daft for the sight o' somethin' green and growin'," she said half to herself and half to Peg.

As she stood on the wind-swept corner during the rest of the afternoon, Wisp wondered if among the many passers-by she would by any chance see the children from Fitzwilliam Square, but the day wore itself away, and when she left her post she had not had so much as a glimpse of any of them. It had been fascinating, though, to think that perhaps she might see them. She scanned groups of girls, especially if they were with a governessy-looking person like Miss Peck, but though several times she saw yellow braids that might be Christine's they always turned out to belong to some one else.

The next day she did see one of them, and it was Keith. She was standing on the corner of College Green with the gray buildings of Trinity College back of her. Her tray was nearly empty, for in spite of the war and the bleakness of that January afternoon, many people were glad to stop for a little bunch of something bright and fragrant, and several

wounded soldiers in convalescent homes had one of Wisp's carefully arranged bouquets lying by his pillow that day.

Keith was on the opposite side of the street, but he saw Wisp. He recognized her by the bright flapping of her hair. He pulled off his cap to her as he went on his way to Mitchell's where he met the others for tea. He did not mention to them that he had seen Wisp. He could not adjust himself to their all being acquainted with a funny little slum girl who sold flowers.

On her way home that night with her empty tray Wisp met the Old Man of Johnson's Court. He was a very old man indeed, and he had a kindly face and smile. Wisp knew him well and stopped for a word with him. She put a copper on his basket and would not take any of the wares he offered her for sale, but because she did not want to make him feel that she was giving him charity she said:

"I was a-wantin' of ye to share me good day." Then she told him about his old friend, Auntie Moneypenny, assuring him that in spite of the cold, auntie's rheumatism was better than it had been the winter before. She had a long chat with the Old Man of Johnson's Court and after stopping at a little shop for two buns and a pint bottle of milk, she went on to Jeffers Court.

The next day Molly was able to go on with her own flower trade and Wisp spent the afternoon in

house-cleaning. She scoured Fairy Cottage. She put down the rose bath mat which made such a splendid rug. She put up a tiny curtain made of pink and white cheesecloth at the hole in the wall. She strung it on a string and put a nail in at each end. She washed her shelf and put all her treasures in a neat row, the poetry book, the brown paper copy books in which she kept the records of her Jeffers Court pupils and a few odds and ends, including three white handkerchiefs with colored borders, and she kept the wonderful shawl in a box in Auntie Moneypenny's room, along with the few pieces of clothing that she owned.

Cleaning house is energetic business and she was resting for a few moments when a voice reached her from the stairway. It was Peg's.

"Ma's had the doctor for Tin, the same one as came to see Auntie Moneypenny last winter, the one from the dispensary. He says as how one of us must be sittin' up all night to give him his medicine!" As she spoke Peg's voice sounded so sleepy that it did not look as though she would be the one to do it.

Wisp took up the poetry book from off the shelf and the little black and white shawl that auntie had given her from its hook by the door, and then she climbed down the ladder.

"I've been cleanin' house most o' the afternoon," she said as they went down the stairs together. "It looks fine and grand if it is me own place," she

went on, and there was pride in her voice as she spoke.

"It do be a grand house. We ain't had a party for a good while now," answered Peg as they stepped cautiously in the half darkness. There were places where the stairs were broken and it would not do to fall down the steep flights.

"Maybe when Tin gets well I'll have a party. Shure, I'll have to be a-keepin' o' me word, and I was after promisin' O'Sullivan I'd have one when his arm was on the mend," replied Wisp. And Peg said, "O'Sullivan Finney don't deserve no party, arm or no arm. So lazy as he be in school and so disobligin'."

"I'd have him because I promised; and Foggy and ye and Tin and Dawson, and maybe—" Wisp hesitated and then she thought of the warm, happy brightness into which she and Foggy had been welcomed Christmas Eve. "Maybe I'll have the Kinsales, the two girls. They ain't never come and they do be a-wantin' to. Some will have to sit on the ladder and on the top o' the stairs," she went on.

They had reached the door leading to the Casey abode and stood talking there together before going in. From the dark street came a frail flicker of a street light and the heavy sound of motor lorries passing in the distance. Wisp looked off for a moment at the shadowy night beyond them. "Do ye know, Peg, I do be thinkin' the city's queer these days," she said. They stood there, the two friends,

in the grimy courtyard. Then they went on inside to Peg's home.

Mrs. Casey greeted Wisp cordially. "Come in, me dear, and glad I am to see ye. It do be a bad time for the likes o' us. Ain't it awful, darlin', to have Tin so bad with a cold? Croup is what the doctor said, but he ain't too bright from the looks o' him. I ain't goin' to char till Saturday and we'll be livin' on me Christmas tips till then." Mrs. Casey picked up her Sunday bonnet, black, with a nodding rose, which lay on a table between a dish of treacle, a dark molasses-like mixture, and a loaf of bread. Mrs. Casey had been to a funeral.

Tin was better, but the doctor's orders must be obeyed. Some one must sit up all night and watch him.

"Me charin' all day, and Peg going off to sleep if ye look at her!" wailed Mrs. Casey.

"I'll sit up with Tin, Mrs. Casey. I ain't sleepy and there's a good many things I want to think about," volunteered Wisp.

"Bless ye, now ain't that the kind thing of her to be after sayin', Peg? But I'd not let ye, child," Mrs. Casey answered, and, in spite of her words, looking very much relieved.

"It would be me pleasure. You and Peg go right to bed," Wisp answered, drawing the shawl close about her and sitting down close to Tin's cot, her book in her hand.

"Shure, darlin', it's a fine girl ye are and I was

after tellin' Minnie Kinsale so the other day. I says to her, 'Ye'll not find another girl like Kathleen. She's worth all yer own brats put together.' " Mrs. Casey was making rapid preparations for bed as she spoke and soon both she and Peg were sound asleep, but I do not think they were as much in the land of dreams as was Wisp herself, though she sat bolt upright on a stool by Tin's cot, her shawl about her shoulders, her book lying on the floor at her feet.

It was very quiet except for the wind, which always seemed to be talking around Jeffers Court, and the scuttle of rats in the walls.

As she sat there tired from her house-cleaning, but not sleepy, Wisp little knew that her friends in Fitzwilliam Square were making plans for her. Wisp was weaving a story, and since she told that story to a group of children whom by this time you know well, on a fairy hill at the first hint of spring, I'll wait and let you have it then. Now you can only see her sitting there, her hands clasped about her knees, listening to something beyond the wind, to something which perhaps was fairy music.

XIV.—The Apple Tart Woman

Two evenings later Foggy ran all the way up to the foot of the ladder leading to Fairy Cottage. He had come two and even three steps at a time, and when Wisp first appeared he could only puff and smile, holding out an envelope. She ran down the ladder and, taking the note from him, sat down on the lowest rung and opened it. Then she read it out loud to her friend.

Dear Wisp:

We wish very much to talk with you, as we have something to suggest. Some one will see Foggy when he comes in the morning and will you send word by him if you can come and see us at eight o'clock to-morrow evening? With love,

Christine Langsley, Joan Langsley,
Victoria Langsley, Beryl Langsley,
Nina Witheringhaugh.

"Ain't it nice, Foggy?—kind o' mystery like." Wisp read it over again to herself, repeating out loud the words, "we have something to suggest." Something—what a fascinating sound it had—something; why, it might be almost anything. What could it be?

Foggy had no idea and so could not help Wisp to solve the mystery. "It looks to me as though maybe they had some nice plan. They're awful nice young ladies," Foggy said cheerfully.

Auntie Moneypenny was excited over the note and said she felt sure something was going to happen. "They like ye and they want to know ye, and they're writin' to plan out somethin'. Ye can wear my lace collar me husband gave me on the day we was betrothed when ye go to-morrow night," she said to Wisp that evening.

"I ain't got nothin' good enough to go with it, auntie," Wisp answered, but she spoke happily and she smiled at the old woman as she came and sat on the stool beside her.

Tin was his own man again, running about the courtyard and as sunny as ever, but auntie had had a twinge of her old enemy, rheumatism, and though she would not admit it, had had some very lonely days while Wisp was out selling flowers or helping to take care of Tin.

The afternoon before there had been a consultation at 50 Fitzwilliam Square. Beryl had phoned to Hawk House and had asked Mrs. Witheringhaugh

if Nina might stay on for most of the afternoon as they wanted to talk something over. Nina came for lessons and generally stayed for lunch. This had happened for three days, the maid appearing soon after lunch to take Nina home. Mrs. Witheringhaugh said that she would come herself for Nina and would be glad of a little talk with Miss Peck if convenient for her.

"We must get together directly lunch is over. Now, one thing must be decided right away. Shall we or shall we not tell Patrick? If we do tell him he will have to know, of course, about the secret staircase and room, and that's a bad plan. He is liable to forget and come out with something at any time. It would mean having him around all the time, but worst of all it would mean Blighty all the time and he jabbers so we simply wouldn't be able to hear ourselves think!"

Beryl said all this to the girls after Miss Peck had left the schoolroom and before the gong went for lunch.

"I say that we do not have Paddy. He's too young to be of any help about teaching Wisp and as you say he might let out the secret without meaning to. He spends so much time in the garden and they want him to be outdoors as much as possible. He won't miss us at all. He would rather play with Blighty than any one," said Victoria, and they all knew then that Patrick would be left out.

"I don't know," objected Joan. "He might have

something to teach Wisp. He knows several Indian songs and one or two juggling tricks, easy ones of course."

Beryl raised her eyebrows at this. Christine and Joan were both so young at times that it was distressing.

"I think we can manage very well without him, Joan," Victoria answered in her most grown-up manner, and the matter was settled then and there.

"We can have the room ready by day after tomorrow, so that's the time we'd better set for her to come—hush, here's Miss Peck and there's the gong. We can talk about it all after lunch."

Later they stealthily climbed the secret staircase to the funny room with the sound of dripping water from a cistern in the corner. It did not look very prepossessing that afternoon. There was no doubt about that. It was fairly warm, for it was above a part of the kitchen. There was no great danger, however, in being heard from below because the walls and floors were so thick. It would be best not to talk over loud, Beryl informed them as soon as they reached the room.

"We might forget and laugh too loud or something. Then it's possible Cook could hear us, but of course she never would give us away if she knew we wanted all this kept a secret. Cook is such a dear," said Beryl.

"It's a dingy-looking place. Goodness, I wonder

if we can ever make it look like anything human," commented Christine.

Beryl sighed. "If you'll only give me time, Christine! It is going to be all right. I promise you that," she answered, measuring the window with the tape measure which had been so much in evidence when they first came over to the house. "This is a very dark day and one of the coldest we've had all winter. I wish now I hadn't brought any of you up here until I'd fixed it up a bit. I have some chintz left over and it will do for cushions for the two chairs I found in the storeroom. There's that stool in the corner; there will be enough of the curtain material for a cushion for that," went on Beryl.

"What about a table?" asked Nina, deeply interested in as much as she understood. She had never seen Wisp, and though the situation had been explained to her after a fashion, she was a little vague about it all. She was devoted to Beryl and willing to do anything that she wished. She was so happy to be among them all and could hardly believe in her own good fortune. She was so changed already that the grim inhabitants of Hawk House hardly knew her.

"Well, I'll tell you what I think we can do. There's an old table in the laundry. I've been quietly looking around the last day or so and I've discovered it. It's off in a corner by itself and there is nothing on it but some boxes and a pail of old paint. A tub that isn't used, a broken one, is in

front of it and I don't think any one will notice if we bring it up here. We can cover it with a piece of oilcloth; nail it down, you know. It will make a dandy school table. I bought the oilcloth at McByrney's to-day."

"You're splendid, Beryl, the way you think of everything," Victoria said approvingly. As it looked at present, the room seemed dismal beyond words to Victoria.

"Well, that's easy for me; planning I mean. I'll bring up my books, but the rest of you will have to see to your own. I'm strong on arithmetic and I'm going to study up a bit, though I suppose she is ever so behind in it," answered Beryl.

They crept softly down the stairs and, as it was still early, went on out into the garden talking over their plans and making new ones.

The next afternoon Wisp took Molly's place for an hour with the tray of flowers and she stationed herself again at the corner of College Green. It was her favorite corner of all Dublin and it gave her a thrill to be standing there in the midst of all the rush and bustle. It was a bad day for flower-selling, perhaps because it was so cold, and Wisp was disappointed that the gay array on the tray disappeared so slowly. She would have loved to keep them just to enjoy their fragrance and their beauty if it had not been for Molly, but poor Molly was bad indeed with her cold and needed all the pennies she could get.

Wisp hardly felt the cold, so busy was she with her thoughts. That evening she was to go to Fitzwilliam Square. She had sent a note by Foggy to say that she would come. "We have something to suggest." What fun it was to think of those words, and what did they mean?

"I'll have a bunch of roses, sweet wee things that they be," said a cheery voice at her side. She looked up and there standing before her stood the "Apple Tart Woman," as she and Peg had called her. The same red, smiling, kindly face and comfortable cloak!

Wisp spoke before she knew what she said, so surprised was she at seeing her.

"You're the Apple Tart Woman," she said, and then she colored with confusion. "We called ye that after ye was so good to us, givin' us the fine tart that Tinnyhinch Casey knocked out o' your hand," exclaimed Wisp, picking out the finest bunch of roses and handing it to the woman with a smile.

"Bless your heart, dear. I remember well. I've a farm up near the Rocky Valley and I was in a rush to get to the market for I've a friend there who drives me out. Welcome you were indeed to the tart, dear." The Apple Tart Woman put her coins down on the tray and started to turn away. Then she looked back at Wisp.

"You're young to be selling flowers, aren't you?" she asked.

"I'm fourteen, ma'am. I'm sellin' these for Molly Gruffy who has a cold," Wisp answered her.

"Do you live near here, dear?" asked the woman.

"At Jeffers Court on Cuff Street near the green, ma'am," said Wisp, and then she added, "I know the Rocky Valley. I know it well. I go out there in the spring." She gave her head an emphatic little shake. "There's many a place there I know well," she added.

The woman in the gray cloak looked at her in astonishment.

"I never!" she exclaimed. She looked at Wisp for a moment in silence. "When you're up that way again and you see a white house with a barn back of it painted green, come and see me. I'll give you another tart maybe," she said.

"Thank you, ma'am," Wisp answered her, and she looked after her as her gray cloak disappeared in the crowd. Then an odd thing happened. She wanted so very much to see the Apple Tart Woman again that she almost ran after her through the crowd.

She thought about her on the way home and after she reached Fairy Cottage. She thought about her as she brushed her dress and washed her face and hands and combed out the tangles in her bright hair. Fairy Cottage with all its fresh house-cleaned appearance, its Christmas rose and white bath mat that made such a splendid rug, did not seem quite as homey as it had before. A white house with a

green barn on the edge of the Rocky Valley! Rooms and steps and doors and real windows, a cow perhaps and of course a cat, and flowers, flowers, flowers.

She sat down on the floor of Fairy Cottage (you could not stand upright in it) and put her face close to the clean cheesecloth curtain. To think that for one moment she had thought that any place could be as dear to her ever as was Fairy Cottage, any window as fascinating as the hole that Foggy had cut for her, the hole that showed her the sun and the stars and sometimes the moon. No, nothing could ever, ever be as much her very own, as full of dreams as Fairy Cottage.

XV.—In the Secret Room

Cook peered out of the kitchen window, listening. She thought she heard voices and she could not understand from whence they came. Cook was timid and she knew that except for the children she was alone in the house. Miss Peck had gone to a lecture on Red Cross work and Mrs. Mink after a strenuous day of directing and scolding and commanding, in other words after a day of house-cleaning, had gone for an evening with her dear friend in Glasnevin.

Cook listened a moment longer, and then, certain that she must have been mistaken, shut down the window and went on to the little room off the kitchen to finish a red and blue checked blouse which she was making, and which she expected to wear at an evening party of a friend at the end of the week.

Beryl knew that Miss Peck was going to the lecture and that is the reason she set the time for Wisp to come. It was doubly fortunate that Mrs. Mink was to be out and the children were sure that all would be clear sailing. Christine had seen Foggy in the morning and had cautioned him not to tell Patrick anything about anything that Wisp might tell him and he promised faithfully not to do so. Joan was not very pleased at her brother being left out of the secret and the fun and said so several times. Victoria quite snubbed her finally.

"You must realize, Joan, that Paddy is only a baby. Why he's hardly ten and moreover, he's a boy. He wouldn't have the slightest interest in what we are trying to do for Wisp and he would be a great bother. You've been with him so much that you are really too childish for words yourself!" Joan did not say any more about Patrick's joining them after that, but she still wanted him and she still thought that the others were a little selfish not to let him join in.

"If he doesn't know anything about it he can't mind not being in it," Beryl said to her as they waited for Wisp's arrival that evening.

"Isn't it splendid that Pecky took him with her? He will be bored before the lecture is over, especially as Blighty isn't with him, but he seemed to want so much to go. I guess it was just to be outdoors at night," whispered Beryl as they waited at

the small side door leading from the garden into the little entry that led to the secret room.

"It's a good thing for us that he did want to go with Pecky for I don't know what we would have done otherwise. He never would have spent the whole evening with Cook," answered Christine.

Foggy had had instructions to bring Wisp to the small green-latticed door off the servants' entrance walk and they appeared promptly at eight. Foggy saw that the girls were waiting for his friend and, waving his hand, disappeared as suddenly as they had come. Wisp ran up to the little group that was waiting for her and was greeted by the word, "Hush!" They opened the door and when they were all safe inside at the foot of the secret staircase, Christine kissed her and said in quick, excited tones:

"We have a plan for you and you'll know about it in just a second. It's a secret, and you mustn't tell any one except Foggy."

"Can't I tell Auntie Moneypenny?" asked Wisp.

"Yes," Victoria answered. "Yes, you may tell her because she is your very old friend and will be glad for you."

"I'm going to run on up ahead and light the candles. We didn't think it was safe to go off and leave them lighted," Beryl explained. She ran on up ahead of the others. After a moment she called softly, "Come!"

They were up the narrow steep flight of steps in

a twinkling, all of them, and when they reached the top they pushed Wisp gently forward.

"You go in first," said Victoria.

Who would ever have known the dreary, bare little room? It was transformed into the rosiest, cosiest place imaginable, or so at least it seemed to Wisp. There was a box containing three geranium plants in the window. The chintz-covered chairs stood invitingly about. The table which Beryl had discovered in the laundry was covered with a rose cloth at the corners of which were teakettles done in cross-stitch. Beryl had made it to send home to a friend in America but decided instead to use it for the "Secret Room." It was almost impossible to send packages home just then, so she was glad to have another use for the pretty cover. On the table were piled all the books that they had been able to gather together. There were two lighted candles on the table and another on a little shelf above it. On the floor was the fur rug from Beryl's and Christine's bedroom.

"We don't really need it for we have the big rug that fits the whole floor. Pecky never will notice that it's gone. She's too nearsighted and we can tell the housemaid if she should say anything about it that we don't need it in the bedroom any more," Beryl had said and Christine had agreed that it would be splendid for the chilly Secret Room.

The fresh chintz curtain had been put up at the window and in fact the whole room was the result

of much labor on Beryl's part. The others had helped, but they did not have the ideas that Beryl had and they were not so clever at making things, or planning.

The whole effect of the room was rose and blue, and in the soft candlelight it looked as charming as possible. Wisp stood still on the top step, looking across at Beryl, not knowing what to think or say.

"We've made this into a schoolroom for you, and if you want us to we are willing to teach you everything we know. It will be fun and we want to do it. It's going to be a secret, as I said downstairs," announced Beryl.

Christine came up to Wisp and slipped her arm about her waist.

"You've taught me things, Wisp, so I thought I'd like to do something for you. You said you wanted to learn things and we'd love to teach you anything we do know if you'll let us."

Beryl was busy arranging the books on the table.

"We've talked it over and each one said what she knew best and what she wanted to teach," went on Beryl.

Wisp looked from one to the other of them for a moment in silence. She stood with her hands clasped in front of her, her shock of gold hair falling about her face. There were big tears in her eyes, and for a moment as she stood there without speaking, they rolled down her face. Then she rubbed her arm across her eyes.

"Thank ye, Miss Beryl—and all of ye," she said and then she clasped her hands together and looked from one to the other of them. "Indeed, indeed I do want to learn things—oh, ye don't know how I want to be different."

Beryl drew out a small chair from under the table.

"You'd better sit down and we'll try first of all to find out what you don't know. Then we'll know better how to begin with the lessons," she said.

Christine smiled to herself, for Beryl's tone was exactly like that of one of the teachers at home. She smiled, but she was not happy about the way Beryl had spoken. She did not understand Wisp and it made it all seem different. She meant well and had worked hard to make the room attractive and had been very good-natured about the whole thing, but she could not really see why Christine and Victoria were so interested in the little girl from Jeffers Court. The part that really did interest Beryl was having it all a secret from the rest of the household.

Wisp went over to a chair and sat down obediently. There was a twinkle in her eye as she looked up at Beryl. She was very quick to see things for herself and she saw that they had made a game of it all. She was as happy and pleased as could be and ready to enter into the fun with all her might.

Victoria came up to her and sat down in a chair next her.

"It's true what Christine said about your having helped us. You will do that more and more I know. You see Christine and I know more about you than you think. We saw you teaching the little class at Jeffers Court. We stood back in the entrance way and listened. Oh, Wisp," Victoria put her hand on Wisp's arm as she spoke, "you don't know how we loved watching you. You mustn't mind our having done it without telling you. We loved it best of all when you said the Little Lamb poem. You see we know a great many poems between us and that was one thing that made us want to help you."

This was a long speech for Victoria, but she was much in earnest. She wanted Wisp to understand that it was not through pity that they had asked her to come to the Secret Room for lessons. Christine came over to the table and Joan followed her. They none of them quite knew how to begin and it was Wisp herself who helped them. She leaned forward in her earnest way and she was so small and thin that she was almost lost in the big cushioned chair.

"There's one thing that is the most needed for me, Miss Victoria," she said, turning toward her. "If ye can help me to speak right I can learn the other things easier."

Victoria nodded. "Yes, you have a lovely voice and when you can learn to speak English correctly you'll love to say poems," she answered.

Wisp nodded. "I do that now, miss. I say poems,

but they ain't said right I know well enough. I've always been a great one for poems," she declared.

"Say some, please!" It was Joan who spoke and she came up close to Wisp as she said it. She was beginning to be interested.

Wisp looked toward Christine and Victoria. "Shall I?" she asked, and as they nodded she folded her hands on the table and this is what she said to them:

"Farewell to Sliev Morna, the hills of the winds!
Where the hunters of Ulin pursue the brown hinds!
Farewell to Lock Ern where the wild eagles dwell!
Farewell to Shanavon, Shanavon farewell!
Farewell to our castles, our oak blazing halls,
Where the red fox is prowling alone in the walls!
Farewell to the joys of the harp and the shell,
Farewell to Ierne; Ierne, farewell!"

When Wisp had finished, before any one else could speak Joan cried out:

"Oh, teach me to say it like that, Wisp!"

"It is lovely the way you do it, Wisp," Christine said impulsively, and what she said was true. Wisp's brogue and her odd way of twirling her words added to the quaint charm of the old Irish poem which she had said to them.

"Arithmetic is the only way I can really help and I think we'd better start right in. I have a very easy book here, one of the first ones I used and I am good at explaining; you know I am, Christine. I've helped Christine with her examples all her life, only I must say she, well, she is as dense as a stone wall

about understanding them!" Beryl was looking over the books on the table as she spoke and she picked up a big brown one and opened it to the first page.

Wisp looked up, shaking the hair out of her eyes.

"It's no use, Miss Beryl, for I couldn't learn it, indeed I couldn't. I'll do me best with the other studies, and oh, I do thank ye a thousand times for all the trouble ye are after takin', but not that, please, miss, not arithmetic. Ye see I teach school a bit myself just in a way ye know, Miss Beryl, but ain't it awful I ain't taught any number work except helpin' Foggy to add?" She waved her hands out in a funny little way she had of doing, and they all laughed, even Beryl, though she said disapprovingly, "You must learn it, of course. You never can get along in life without it."

"How prim and school-teachery Beryl sounds," thought Christine.

Victoria went over and sat down on an old wood box which they had covered with a cushion. She put her chin in her hand and sat looking meditatively at Wisp for a moment, then she spoke:

"As she loves poetry, why not have her learn something we know? She can say it very slowly and that will help her to pronounce the words. We can each say some verses that we like and she can choose which one she wants to learn first," she suggested.

This was agreed upon and Beryl began, reciting the only poem that she knew, a relic of the Friday afternoon piece-speaking they had had at school. It was "The Landing of the Pilgrims," and Beryl boomed out with, "The breaking waves dashed high," in splendid fashion! Wisp was vague about American history, but she wanted to know about it and she liked the poem.

Nina, who was uneasy for fear Aunt Witheringhaugh's maid would come for her before the school session was over, was called upon next for a poem and had to think for some time before one came to her. She then astonished them all by saying one in Italian. She had had an Italian governess when she was seven years old and had been taught some verses and she said this funny one of Christina Rossetti's.

"It's supposed to be funny and it's about how queer a pig would be if he wore a wig," explained Nina and she recited the jingle in her funny little voice. Joan nearly bit off the end of a penholder she had in her hand in an effort not to laugh.

"Porco la zucca fitta in parrucca!
Che gli diresti mai?
'M' inchinerei, l'ossequierei—
'Ser Porco, come stai?'
'Ahi guai per caso mai
Se la coda andasse a male?' . . .
'Sta tranquillo-buon legale
Gli farebbe un codicillo.' "

No one knew just what to say when Nina finished, but all of them, even Beryl, were impressed. The girls from India knew some French but they did not know Italian and they had more respect for Nina's education from that time on.

"Hurry up, Christine, or whoever comes next," commanded Beryl, and Christine said the wonderful lines about the dying boy who galloped to Napoleon.

"You know we French stormed Ratisbon," her voice rang out clearly there in the funny old room, and when she came to the last line she saw that Wisp was wiping her eyes with the sleeve of her jacket and that there were tears in Victoria's eyes. She felt a little choky herself as she came to the last line:

"I'm killed, sire, and his chief beside, smiling, the boy fell dead!"

"For goodness' sake what a forlorn thing that is. Do think of something cheerful, Joan," remarked Beryl as Christine sat down.

"I don't think it's forlorn; it's splendid," said Victoria.

Joan giggled. "Christine made such a funny Napoleon, though, didn't she?" she laughed. They all laughed then, for Christine had been funny with her yellow braids sticking out each side of her serious face.

Joan eyed Victoria after she stood up. They had had a governess in India who had loved poetry and had taught them to learn and love it too.

"What shall I say, Vic?" asked Joan.

"Why not one of Wordsworth's?" suggested her sister.

Joan shook her dark curls vigorously. "Oh, no! They're too goody-goody," she objected.

"Not all of them. You used to love 'The Solitary Reaper.' "

"Oh, yes, I do like that one. I learned it up in the hills a year ago." There was a homesick droop to Joan's lips as she said the last.

"Do say it, Joanie," said Christine, and so Joan did say it.

"Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
Oh listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

"No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travelers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In springtime from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

"Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,

And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

"What'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

"Isn't that a doty one?" said Wisp softly as Joan finished.

"Now you hurry up with yours, Victoria, and then we'll plan what else besides learning poetry Wisp is to do for next time. Then we'll have refreshments." This from Beryl who felt that they had had more than enough poetry and thought it was high time they did something else.

Victoria sat back a little in the shadow with the candlelight flickering about her. She had on a soft white wool frock which she had worn at dinner and there was a black sash about her waist. Her face was very fair under its mantle of dark hair. She sat with her hands folded lightly in her lap.

"I don't know what to say. I've been thinking of Tennyson and of how the Lily Maid loved Lancelot. I've been thinking about it all the evening.

Isn't it odd that I should! I mean this is such a funny room and yet it makes me feel romantic. I might just say that bit from Elaine."

And so, sitting there in the shadow she said these lines of Tennyson's:

"Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them all:
My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear,
Know that for this most gentle maiden's death
Right heavy am I; for good she was and true,
But loved me with a love beyond all love
In women, whomsoever I have known.
Yet to be loved makes not to love again;
Not at my years, however it hold in youth.
I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave
No cause, not willingly, for such a love:
To this I call my friends in testimony,
Her brethren, and her father, who himself
Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,
To break her passion, some discourtesy
Against my nature: what I could, I did.
I left her and I bade her no farewell;
Tho', had I dreamed the damsel would have died,
I might have put my wits to some rough use,
And helped her from herself."

"I love that one the best. I'd like to be a-learning of that one next time," said Wisp when Victoria had finished.

"Then that's settled," said Beryl briskly. "And now what else?"

They fell to talking all at once and it was with some difficulty that the next lesson's program was arranged. Wisp was to learn a page of First Year

grammar and Beryl was to explain it. She was to learn the names and dates of reigns of the first five kings of Great Britain and was to spell and pronounce correctly ten words which Christine wrote out for her and of course she was to learn the poem.

After all this had been decided upon Beryl went over to a shelf and brought back a tray on which was a thermos bottle, some cups and saucers, and a plate of cake.

"It's cook's seed cake and she let me make some cocoa after our dear Mrs. Mink went to Glasnevin and she didn't ask any questions," she said as she poured the cocoa from the thermos into the cups.

It was fun having the cocoa and cake, but they had to hurry with them, for Beryl saw by her watch that it was almost time for Miss Peck to come back. As they were going down the stairs Wisp looked back at the pink and blue room, dark now except for the flicker of their candle.

"I don't know how to say it," she said, speaking half to them and half to herself. "Oh, I can't tell ye how I thank ye, but I think the star must have answered my prayer."

XVI.—Victoria Visits Fairy Cottage

It rained and rained and rained through the latter part of January and it was still raining in February. But there are rainy days and rainy days! Some are really enjoyable. It's fun to look over old letters and cards and even paper-doll houses—things of the past put away for just the sort of time when the rain simply plunges down and there doesn't seem to be anything else to do.

This rainy day in February of which I speak was not a cozy, jolly one. It was extremely disagreeable. They had had three meetings in the Secret Room and Wisp had proved to be an apt pupil, though an unusual one. She had learned to say several of the poems, but she would say them in her own way and try as they would they could not teach her to pronounce the words as they did.

For the past week as it had rained so steadily

they had not been able to meet. Miss Peck did not go out at all, and as Beryl insisted on having the Secret Room and the teaching of Wisp a secret, they could not go on with it without the governess knowing about it.

"I don't really see why Pecky shouldn't know. It's a good thing we're doing, trying to help Wisp," Joan had said one day.

"It would spoil it all," Victoria had answered, and Christine had agreed.

"They wouldn't understand, Joan. They wouldn't, really. You see it isn't just teaching Wisp; it's getting to know her, finding out how different she is," Christine said.

"Oh, it wouldn't be any fun at all if they knew. The fun is having it a secret," Beryl put in.

"Well, rather not!" Nina remarked. "As Christine says, they wouldn't understand." By "they" the girls meant Uncle James and Aunt Witheringhaugh and all who were in authority.

The meetings had been few and far between, but it had been fun planning them. Miss Peck and Mrs. Mink had to be arranged for and then there was Patrick. He had guessed that they were up to something. They had not been able to conceal that much from him, but he had not as yet made much of an attempt at finding it out. He was not a curious child and seemed to prefer Blighty to any other companion.

On this late February day it seemed as though

everything went wrong. Miss Peck had a touch of rheumatism. Mrs. Mink was in her most grumbling mood and went muttering about the house that they were the most unruly and careless set of children it had ever come her way to encounter. The lessons seemed unusually difficult that morning and Miss Peck was not quite her usual patient, cheerful self.

Beryl and Christine had not heard from their father in several weeks and somehow on this rainy day they seemed to realize it as they had not done before. He was all the real family they had, for as they said to themselves, "cousins and uncles aren't quite the same," and they missed him in spite of the jolly household at Fitzwilliam Square.

Patrick had been kept in for several days because he had a cold and Miss Peck immediately began to worry about his chest. He missed the garden and was cross. Even Blighty seemed to feel the dreariness of the day, for he sat looking dejectedly out of the window at a budding hawthorn tree by the stone wall which edged the garden all the way around.

Beryl had a battle of words with Mrs. Mink, and the housekeeper, as usual, came off victorious.

Beryl was restless, partly because of not having a letter from her father. She wanted to get hold of the keys and thought she might make a compromise with Mrs. Mink about them. It made it very difficult for them not to be able to have access to any of the provisions in the house and to Beryl it was an-

noying in the extreme. She could cook very well and she wanted to be able to show the rest of them that she could and she also wanted to manage. She loved managing!

Mrs. Mink, however, would not hear of it and all Beryl's words were in vain. When Beryl left her with her head high in the air she announced, "I shall write and complain of you to Uncle James to-night, Mrs. Mink."

The housekeeper had replied placidly, "It won't do a bit of good, miss!"

Beryl stamped up the stairs and when she came into the schoolroom, or as they preferred to have it called "the study," she slammed the door after her with such a bang that the windows rattled and she made no apology to the others who were sitting around the big center table with their books.

Christine looked up and exclaimed crossly, "How thoughtless you are, Beryl."

Her sister answered, "Shut up!"

There was a moment's silence. Joan, who was reading about the Battle of Waterloo, giggled. Victoria said quietly and coldly, looking up for a moment at Beryl, "I think you are very rude!"

Beryl gave Victoria a sweeping look of scorn and, turning around, went out of the door, slamming it after her harder than ever.

Cook had been given the whole day off to go to her home, which was some way off in the country. The scullery maid had cooked the lunch and had scorched

the soup. The next course at lunch was mutton and vegetable marrow and none of the Langsleys liked vegetable marrow. Miss Peck could not understand why, as she herself was especially fond of it, and she remarked about it gently at lunch that day, just as she always did. "It's so delicious when one becomes accustomed to it," she said.

Patrick particularly disliked mutton because he had always been told that it was so good for him. He scowled at his plate and made a face at Victoria when she urged him to eat it. Beryl talked to no one at the table except Miss Peck. On the whole, lunch was not a pleasant meal.

When it was over Beryl went to the entry cupboard and put on her jacket and a little soft blue sport hat. She fished in the pocket of her jacket and found one glove there and after searching for a few minutes found the other on the floor. This did not improve her temper, for Christine had borrowed her coat to go out to the post box and had been careless about the gloves. Beryl was careful about all her belongings and she did not have a great deal of sympathy for those who were otherwise.

She had ridden a bicycle since she was six and it had not mattered to her in the least that her friends at home thought it an old-fashioned thing to do. She liked to ride one because she could get over the ground quickly. Her father had allowed her to buy one after she came to Dublin. It had been cheap and was in fairly good condition and she used it a

great deal when the weather permitted. To-day she was in the sort of mood when she didn't mind the rain at all and it had lessened to a faint drizzle as she started out. Miss Peck had been uneasy about her going off very far by herself, as she did not know her way about, so as a rule she had ridden around the squares. To-day, however, she made up her mind to go straight out into the country for a good ride.

She pushed her wheel out of the entry door to the Tradesman's Entrance sidewalk, jumped on and was speeding down Fitzwilliam Square in the twinkling of an eye.

She had expected it would be bad traveling, but to her surprise the roads were firm in spite of being wet, and as the rain grew less and less, she was glad indeed that she had come off by herself, and in her own way she was ready for an adventure.

The afternoon at Fitzwilliam Square wore slowly away and every one seemed to find it tiresome. Miss Peck went to her room to lie down. Patrick took Blighty and went out to the kitchen where he stayed for a long time. He worried the scullery maid as she was timid about Blighty. He went into the pantry, but though he searched thoroughly he could not find anything good to eat except a glass jar of semolinas, a kind of yellow raisin. He ate most of these, giving some to Blighty who liked them so much that he whined for more.

Christine was learning to make helmets and sat

frowning over her khaki worsted by the fire in the library. Joan had decided suddenly to make a scrapbook for wounded soldiers and sat on the rug in front of the fire, a pot of homemade paste and a pair of scissors beside her and a pile of old magazines.

"You didn't need the paste at all to-day, Joan. You can't paste things in until you have your scrapbook sewed together. That paper that you have won't do. You need very stiff white paper almost like cardboard. You'll have to buy it. Please be careful and don't ruin the rug with that messy paste," said Victoria in her most blasé tone.

Joan said, "Bosh," and went calmly on cutting out things that took her fancy.

Christine threw down her knitting and yawned. "There's one thing I do adore over here. It's the way we always have tea, rain or shine, even if no one calls. It's sort of like a party every afternoon. It's not really the tea. I have mostly milk in mine. It's the thin bread and butter and the fun of all sitting around the fire and having it," remarked Christine, and she had hardly spoken when there was the bump of the tray against the door and Joan ran to open it for the maid.

Miss Peck did not come down for tea, but Patrick appeared and ate a few remaining raisins with his bread and butter.

"I'm going out to play cricket to-morrow if it rains as hard as a monsoon. I think I'll go out a while now, it's just sort of drizzling."

"You'll do nothing of the kind, Paddy," reproved Joan, and her brother answered, "I will if I want to."

Victoria put her book down on the window seat. It was one that Beryl had loaned her and it was called "Blythe McBride." Victoria was deeply interested in it and had not minded the gloomy afternoon as much because of it.

"Where's cross-patch?" asked Patrick, throwing himself down on the rug beside Joan and stirring the paste vigorously.

"Why, Paddy, aren't you ashamed?" said Joan, looking uneasily at Christine.

"Well, isn't that what you called Beryl? Where is she?" Patrick still stirred the paste, spilling some of it on the rug as he spoke.

"Paddy, will you leave that alone?" snapped Joan.

Victoria stood up and looked out. The rain was almost over. She went out of the room, down the stairs to the hall. Like Beryl, she wanted to go out, but unlike her did not act on the impulse except that she opened the front door and stood on the steps, breathing in the sweet air. As she stood there a messenger boy on a bicycle stopped in front of the house and the boy jumped off the wheel and came up the steps.

"Wire for Langsley, miss," he said.

She took the yellow envelope from him and looked down at it and she saw the words War Office and the address and name, and because she was a Langsley

and that was the name on the envelope, she opened it. The wire read:

"Regret to inform you that Major Charles Edgar Langsley has been missing since January twenty-eighth. Last seen badly wounded near A. S. C. outpost. Dispatch confirmed Salonica."

For a moment Victoria stood there silently in the windy doorway. Then she said to the boy as she signed the slip:

"There is no answer."

He turned away and was off on his wheel, whistling, down the wet sidewalk. Victoria still stood in the open doorway. Was it that very morning that she had spoken so crossly to Beryl? Victoria was a soldier's daughter and at any time her own father might be called out of India with his regiment. As it was, she had once herself been almost in the midst of a hill scrimmage. At any time they had been ready for orders to go here or there. She knew something about being a soldier's daughter, but it came to her suddenly that neither Beryl nor Christine realized just what that meant. Their father had joined the Army Service Corps and they had not understood that he was sometimes in as much danger as those in the front line trenches.

As she stood there in the soft wind with the fresh spring-touched fragrance of wet trees and grass around her, she wondered what was the thing that was best for her to do. She was glad that the wire had fallen into her hands and she knew that there

was little danger of its being in the newspapers for several days, because there were strict regulations about the family being notified first. She made up her mind to one thing, and that was not to speak to any one of the household about the bad news that night. She thought of Miss Peck but put the idea of telling her away. As she was turning to go inside another messenger on a wheel came up the walk and she took the second wire, opened and read it, and again said, "No answer." It was from Uncle James and said simply: "Keep up courage. Making all inquiries. Authorities still searching. James Mortimer Langsley."

Victoria was not at all comforted by Uncle James's wire. There had been no real encouragement in it. He only said they were all doing the best they could to trace the father of Beryl and Christine. Victoria seldom cried and she had no desire for tears at present, but there was an ache at her heart when she went into the library and she was so pale that Miss Peck, who had joined them and was sitting close to the fire, exclaimed about it.

"Come, dear, and sit by me. You are cold, I'm sure, and I know this has been a trying day for all of you. I'm feeling much better now and we must all manage to have a happy evening."

Victoria went over and sat down by Miss Peck. Joan was still busy over her scrapbook, her cheeks red from the hot glow of the fire. Christine had tired of her knitting and it lay on the floor. She

was stretched out on the sofa with a book. Patrick was sliding down the banisters outside. Blighty was curled up on top of a bookcase and was sound asleep.

"I can't think where Beryl can be. I'm quite uneasy," commented Miss Peck.

"She's out on her bike I think, Pecky. It's cleared up and she's probably had a dandy ride and will come back as gay as a cricket. Oh, this is such an interesting book. I came across it in the library. It's short stories and the one I'm reading is a peach. It's called 'An Unfinished Story' and it's so romantic. This man falls in love with a girl but has to go off exploring in Africa and nearly dies. He is rescued and brought back, but in the meantime the girl who thinks he's dead has become engaged to some one else. It's sad and exciting and unusual." Christine buried herself in the book after she had spoken and did not even hear Miss Peck's remark.

"I wonder, dear, if it's just the story for you to read."

Victoria sat quietly, her hands folded in her lap. She was thinking deeply and she, too, was wondering where Beryl was and why she did not come home.

Christine shut her book with a slam.

"It's Richard Harding Davis's story, you know Pecky. The man who rescued the man who was engaged to the girl tells the story before the girl at a dinner party in London. It was dreadful for the girl to have him tell about it before them all, but he was

a cad," Christine said, throwing a sofa pillow at Joan who threw it back and suggested that they have a run in the garden as it had cleared outside.

It was then that the idea came to Victoria. She would keep the bad news about Christine's and Beryl's father from them at least until the next day, but there was one person whom she wanted to see and to whom she could tell the secret that so oppressed her. It was Wisp!

A half hour later she was walking toward Jeffers Court. She had left Christine and Joan in the garden and like Beryl had slipped out unseen. It was a fairly short walk to the green and Cuff Street was not far beyond it. As she walked in the fresh after-rain air Victoria began to feel better. The rain had stopped entirely and the late sun peeped through the clouds with a promise of a jolly day on the morrow.

She had the two wires safe in the pocket of her jacket, but she was not at all sure that she was doing the right thing in keeping them there. Suppose Uncle James should send another one while she was out! That very morning she had spoken so crossly to Beryl. No, she could not end the day by telling her such news. She must wait at least until the next morning.

She turned in at Jeffers Court and stood uncertainly inside the dark entry way. She heard voices all about her, harsh, laughing, and mingled with them the insistent moaning of the wind—Wisp's friend, the wind.

As she stood there in the shadow wondering how best to find Wisp, some one came across the courtyard walking very slowly and leaning heavily on a crutch. When she came close enough Victoria saw that it was a very old woman, so old that her little face, under its closely folded shawl, was wizened and puckered in an odd way.

As she came up to her Victoria felt suddenly timid, but gathering up her courage she asked:

"Could you tell me where Wisp lives, please?"

After she had spoken she remembered that the old woman would not know her little friend by that name. She guessed at once that it was Auntie Moneypenny who peered at her from under the shawl.

"Shure I can tell ye. Come with me, little miss. It's Kathleen ye'll be after wantin'. She said ye had a doty name for her. We'll be a-findin' of her if ye'll come with me!"

Victoria followed her up the steep stairs, and it was a good while before they reached the top of the second flight, for Auntie Moneypenny had to go very slowly, pausing every now and then.

"Won't you let me help you?" asked Victoria, taking her arm in the middle of the first flight.

"Bless ye no, miss. I know these here stairs as well as me own name, miss!" she answered her.

When they reached the second landing she called up the stairs in her high, cracked voice:

"Kathleen! A young lady to see ye!"

Auntie was very much excited at this visit for Wisp. She peered at Victoria kindly and nothing escaped her. When she wanted to auntie could see plainly enough. She had never met any one quite like Victoria before and she wanted to remember just how she looked so that she could think about her and tell about her afterward.

Wisp appeared almost at once, standing at the top of the last flight and looking down into the gloom. Then she flew down, or at any rate she ran so quickly and lightly that it seemed as though she flew. When she reached the last step she touched Victoria on the arm softly.

"Oh, miss. Ye came here. Do ye think ye should have come like this alone on a gray afternoon?" she said to her, and for the first time almost that day Victoria smiled.

"Oh, yes, Wisp. I so wanted to come. I—I've something I want to tell you," she answered her.

"Ye'd better be after a-takin' her to Fairy Cottage," suggested Auntie Moneypenny. "Ye'll be welcome to a cup o' tea at my place when ye come along down."

"Thank ye, auntie. Maybe Miss Victoria will be glad of a sip o' tea after a bit," answered Wisp, smiling up at her old friend, and then, turning to Victoria, she asked, "Will ye come up to me own little place?" and Victoria answered:

"That's what I came for!"

It was exciting climbing the ladder which was wobbly and tottered in a rickety way just as they reached the top. It was fascinating peering around a corner of the blue curtain and the crawling in after Wisp.

So this was Fairy Cottage! The pink and white bath mat was a little dingy now but had been nicely brushed that morning. The shelves were neat as a pin and there was a darn in the curtain flapping at the window, which Foggy had cut out of the side so that Wisp could see the sky.

Victoria curled up on one cushion and Wisp on another. Wisp was so happy over the visit that her eyes shone brighter than ever. "Do ye see whose come to look at ye? Do ye see who's a-visitin' of us, Fairy Cottage?" she questioned in her thought. It was Victoria who began the conversation, leaning forward and putting her hand on Wisp's knee and looking at her so earnestly that her little friend looked back anxiously, seeing that something was wrong.

"Oh, Wisp, I came to you because of what has happened—bad news. Oh, it's been such a dull day at Fitzwilliam Square. You can't think. We were all out of sorts, but I was the worst of all. Beryl slammed the door and I told her she was rude, and now—now—" Victoria put her hand over her eyes and sat silent for a moment.

"Yes, bad news. What do ye mean, Miss Victoria?" Wisp leaned forward as she spoke.

Victoria told her then of the wires which had come.

"Lost! They don't know where he is—Miss Christine's father!" Wisp exclaimed softly after Victoria had finished.

"Don't you see how I feel, Wisp? Oh, it's so dreadful having this secret and knowing what they don't know, but it's worse to think of having to tell them. I can't stay long now, but I knew it would help me to come to see you." With a sudden impulse Victoria leaned forward and putting her arms around Wisp, hugged her. "You're so different. What is there about you, I wonder? I never knew a little girl could live like this way up here alone." Victoria looked around Fairy Cottage as she spoke, and then fearing that Wisp might not think she liked it she went on: "It's a dear place and it's your very own."

Wisp nodded. "It is a good enough home, miss. It suits me well enough," she said modestly. Then she repeated, "Miss Christine's father. They don't know where he is!"

"What shall we do, Wisp?"

"They ain't much we can do. There ain't nothin' I wouldn't do if I could. Ye all doing for me the way ye do—teachin' me and treatin' me like I was—like I was a lady. Ye wantin' to be friends. Miss Christine there in the green that first day I saw her, askin' me about Ireland. No, there ain't nothin' I wouldn't do if I could." Wisp sat with her chin on

her hand, thinking. "Ye did right not to tell to-night. Maybe to-morrow'll be a sort of gold-like day, maybe it'll be easier to think of a way to help." She shook the hair out of her eyes. Then she clasped her hands tightly together and bowed her head over them. "Ain't it lovely, the class up in the Secret Room and all of ye so good to me. I thank the star every night. Me lookin' the way I do and talking all twisted and ye all forgettin' it!" There was a little sob in Wisp's voice as she finished speaking.

"It's because we love you, Wisp, Christine and I," answered Victoria. There was a sudden wail and a wrangle of voices and a call of, "Kathleen!"

Wisp put her head out of the curtain and Victoria looked over her shoulder. At the foot of the ladder stood Minnie Kinsale, O'Sullivan, his young brother, Tin, and Dawson.

"It's an awful night, Kathleen. Kin we come up? O'Sullivan and Dawson kin stay on the ladder. They was real comfortable sitting there the other day when we had the Slade's coffee. Will ye tell us a story, Kathleen?"

Minnie Kinsale looked up imploringly at her friend.

Wisp turned her head toward Victoria. "This do be Miss Victoria Langsley come to call. These be Minnie, O'Sullivan, Dawson, and Tin," she waved her arm toward the last two as she spoke. "They do be the brother and cousin o' me great pal,

Peg Casey, who has gone this afternoon to the dispensary to have two teeth out!"

The faces below brightened a little. That would be something to hear about and enjoy, Peg's account of her visit to the dispensary.

"There ain't no use in your a-wantin' to come along up now. We're invited down to Auntie Moneypenny's for a cup o' tea. To-night when it's dark maybe I'll tell somethin' kind o' creepy. I've a bite o' somethin' for us put away!"

"What?" came in eager question from below.

"Never ye mind and ye needn't shout so loud, O'Sullivan. Ye'll have no more than yer share. Now all of ye go off and play." She made a sweeping gesture with her hand as she spoke.

"There ain't nothin' to do," wailed Minnie.

"They ain't! Is that so? Why not go down to the court and pretend this here place is a sort o' castle and yer best friend is under spell o' magic lock and key. Git together all of yez and think on a way to git her out. Use yer thoughts, such as ye have, and make up somethin'!" Wisp admonished them.

"I'm a fairy," chirped Tin, pounding the dirty floor with a dirty piece of broom handle.

Wisp nodded approvingly.

"Shure, he's more sense than the whole lot o' ye, has Tin. Pattern after him and ye'll be seein' the Little People maybe. Now git out, for I'm busy with me company!"

They started slowly and dejectedly down the

stairs, O'Sullivan's long face looking mournfully over his shoulder.

"There ain't no fun playin' fairies without ye, Kathleen!" he said.

XVII.—In the Butcher's Cart

A year later when Victoria was telling her mother all about things, and there was so very much to tell, she said, "there were funny days and happy days and some disagreeable days, but the strangest day of all was the one when the news came about Uncle Charles!"

When her mother asked her why, except for its being a sad day, it should also have been so strange a one, she did not know just what to tell her. "It may have been that Jeffers Court was so very new and strange to me, perhaps it was just that, but it all seemed like a dream some way, Wisp and Fairy Cottage and the children coming to the foot of the ladder and Wisp telling them to go and play fairies

in the court, and then tea at Auntie Moneypenny's. Oh, mother, you can't think how odd it was! She's such a very, very old person and such a dear. Why, mother, I didn't know people that lived in tenements could be so gentle and polite. Wisp and Auntie Moneypenny were so kind to me that afternoon and they made me feel so welcome. We sat by the stove in Auntie Moneypenny's funny little room and we had the most delicious tea. Auntie said, 'It's all in the brewin', miss.' She told things, not stories exactly, but about when she was young, and oh, I'm sure it must have been thousands of years ago!

"She lived in a cabin when she was young and about the front door the turf was piled up high. She used to earn extra ha'pennys by standing at the top of a hill near her home and sometimes being allowed by the driver to put on the drag chain when the coach was to descend. She was one of twelve children and she was almost always happy. She had Wisp open a queer little trunk and fish out a box, and in it was a daguerreotype of auntie when she was twenty at a race meeting in the country. She had on a cape which she said was blue and her feet were bare, but she was as pretty as could be.

"She loves Wisp, mother, and she kept saying, 'Ye do well to take up with Kathleen. There ain't a smarter, better-hearted gal on the island.' Wisp didn't want her to talk that way but she just would. Then Wisp and Foggy seeing me home. I was only just in time for dinner. I had to act as though noth-

ing had happened, but I felt better than before I went to Jeffers Court. They helped me there to be brave, though they didn't know they did!"

We would like to know more that Victoria said, but after all, since we left her last at Jeffers Court, we can hardly go on with her sayings of a year later. Wisp and Foggy did see her home, and she did feel comforted. Furthermore, she was able to run upstairs and change for dinner without any one commenting on where she had been. She found them all in the library, and sitting on the table, swinging her hat wildly and talking as fast as she could, was Beryl. She had had the greatest fun and she had forgotten all the cobwebs of the morning. She looked up and gave Victoria a friendly nod as she came in.

"Hullo, Vic. I've had a dandy time and didn't want to come back to this old town a bit. I was just telling the others about it all," Beryl said.

Victoria came over and sat down beside Beryl on the table, putting her arm across her cousin's shoulder. "Tell me, too," she said.

"Well, I'll begin from the beginning, though of course there isn't much to tell. It's just that it's so 'ripping,' as Keith says, in the country here. Why it's almost unbelievable!"

"You use that expression all the time now, Berry," put in Christine.

The gong rang just then for dinner and they all went on out to the dining room and through the

soup and beef, even when the queen of puddings was brought on, Beryl still told of her afternoon. She liked to talk, and as every one seemed interested and in much better temper than at lunch, she kept right on entertaining them.

There were a few interruptions during the pudding, for Patrick said, "We've had this pudding three times in eight days"; and Blighty, who had also recovered his spirits, made a grab at the maid as she put Patrick's dish in front of him and caught some meringue on his paw. Every one laughed except Miss Peck and Victoria. Miss Peck remarked as she had often done before, "I wish we could persuade dear Patrick that it would be best for all of us and for Blighty if he were not allowed in at meals."

After this Beryl had clear sailing for some time, and the first part of her narrative she condensed into as few words as possible so that Victoria could keep up with the story.

"I made for the Stillorgan Road when I started out on my bike. We've driven that way when we've gone to Nina's. You know the road that goes out toward Bray, the one with high stone walls all along and glimpses of fascinating places that must have lovely gardens in summer. I rode on and on for miles, simply skimmed along, I couldn't tell you how far, when suddenly, pop! I had a puncture! There I was leagues from home and although the rain didn't amount to much, still it was drizzling. I sat down by the side of the road with the mean old bike

propped up beside me. It was open where I was and real country. I heard wheels creaking and along came a cart drawn by a fat little horse and driven by the nicest person I've met in Ireland. Her name is Della Dolough!"

"What? Say it again!" exclaimed Joan.

"Della Dolough. She's fat and red-faced and wears a gray cloak. She wants us all to come and see her on her farm, and what do you think, it's at the edge of Rock Valley and she says you can see Hawk House from her attic window. Her farm sounds perfectly fascinating. You know how I want one myself. Well, I was simply enthralled by the description of hers."

"Did she tell you all about it there in the rain as you sat by the side of the road?" asked Christine.

Beryl laughed. Her cheeks were very red from the wind, and she looked very different from the Beryl of the morning.

"She saw the fix I was in and said right off that she could give me a lift and we put the bike in the back of the cart. There was room for it, though I don't see now how we ever managed to find the space. Della was on her way into Dublin with produce for market in the morning. She raises things under glass in winter. She's a person after my own heart; she has good common sense. She says she'll teach me a lot about gardening. We had such a good talk coming in and became almost friends. It stopped raining and do you know it is

queer in Ireland. Why, I can't explain it, but all of a sudden it seemed to be summer! Everything was so green and there were wild roses budding and Della says primroses will be out next month, early in March. Yes, there is something about Ireland that is alluring!"

"You said you'd had such a wonderful time. It doesn't seem to me that very much did really happen," commented Joan over her pudding.

Beryl looked at her meditatively.

"I know it. It doesn't sound much now that I tell about it. I think perhaps it was being like that right out in the country and yet so near the city, and it was sort of realizing that spring is really here when this morning everything seemed wintry and horrid," she answered.

"I know why it is that Beryl's so happy about meeting the woman on the Stillorgan Road, Vic. It's because they're interested in the same things, out-of-doors, but a sort of different out-of-doors than ours—animals, and planting, and all that. Berry found some one that understood just as we found Wisp," Christine said to Victoria.

"Yes," her cousin answered gently. She was thinking of Jeffers Court and of the friends who had understood there that afternoon. She felt more and more sure that it had been better not to tell that evening. It would have been too cruel. Beryl coming home radiant with her afternoon, Beryl to whom she had spoken so crossly just that morning.

No, she could not have confronted her then with such bitter news. That night at any rate they must be together in the firelight, the others happy and she herself trying to hope.

Wisp watched the clouds for a long time because she wanted more than she ever had before to see the star that was her friend. It came at last, blue fire winking at her between great gray clouds. Wisp always spoke to the star as though it was very near.

"Dear Star, Christine and Beryl's father mustn't be lost. Watch over him and bring him back. I won't wish about bein' nice and ladylike any more. I'll be willin' to end me days at Jeffers Court if only the young ladies' father isn't lost," she whispered to the star.

To-morrow came and the hint of magic in the air which had come to Beryl the day before was closing in the sunshine, twittering in the faintly budding trees, and calling from green meadows and valleys. Wisp peered around the corner of Foggy's butcher cart at the closed windows of 50 Fitzwilliam Square. She was so excited that her eyes shone brighter than ever and it seemed as though Foggy would never come back from the kitchen where he was delivering his meat and something else: a note that she had written to her friends. It was quite a little time and she knew it would be because he would have to wait until they wrote her an answer. This was her note:

DEAR MISS CHRISTINE AND ALL OF YOU:

Spring came to-day and Foggy's the afternoon off and the loan of the cart and Jumbles. If I ain't too bold maybe you would all come for a ride to Dalkey. Foggy knows the boatman who is cousin to him and maybe he'll be after taking us a row over to the island. It do be queer on the island. I looked for the spelling of some of these here words out of Miss Beryl's book. Send note please by Foggy and we'll be a-waiting for you here at one o'clock.

WISP.

Foggy handed Wisp the answer as he jumped up into the cart. He was almost as interested as his friend and listened eagerly as he flapped the reins and Jumbles started off.

DEAR WISP:

'Spring did come this morning. Isn't it dandy? We can go, and it's fine the way it's working out. Miss Peck is spending the afternoon with the sister of her former pupil. Mrs. Mink is going to clean house upstairs. We'll all be ready at one-thirty, can't come before as we must have lunch. We will dodge out when Mrs. Mink is at the other side of the house. What fun!

CHRISTINE.

"They don't know. Miss Victoria hasn't told them. They're comin'! We'll be after a-givin' of 'em a good day, Foggy! Ain't it grand? Spring come and all of us off for Dalkey and maybe if ye can find yer friend, for the island, showin' of 'em the island. Ain't it good, Foggy?"

Foggy nodded. "It do be rare fine to-day and the first day o' March ain't for two days yet." His

good-natured face was wreathed in smiles and he whistled with vigor as they made their way back toward the corner where he was to leave Wisp.

At half past one they drew up in front of the Fitzwilliam Square house and after a very few moments they all appeared. The girls came first and when Foggy saw that they were carrying baskets, he jumped down and lifted them up, shoving them under the front seat of the wagon. He had put a board in very neatly in the middle of the wagon so that it made another seat. Beryl and Joan sat with him in front and Victoria and Christine on the board. Wisp sat down beside Patrick, who curled up in the back of the cart. Patrick had Blighty with him, but no one had time to object and every one was tired of doing so. Blighty had gone everywhere with them except to St. Patrick's Cathedral on Christmas Day, and it was taken for granted that he always would.

Christine whispered to Victoria after they had started, "Isn't this the funniest thing you ever did?"

Victoria whispered back, "Yes, it's like the sort of thing we do in dreams."

Victoria was very thankful about their going off for the rest of the day. She had been uneasy all the morning listening for the doorbell, fearing that another message might come and that the girls might find out the truth in a harsher way than her telling them would be, but there had only been lessons, saying good-by to Miss Peck who was leaving them for the afternoon, lunch, evading Mrs. Mink, who for-

tunately was directing cleaning in the garden side of the house. Now they were off for Dalkey in the sunshine. There would be the happy afternoon and then Victoria told herself, Christine and Beryl must be told the truth. It could not be kept from them any longer.

Blighty took a sudden fancy to Wisp and sat on her knee staring up at her and Wisp stared back at him. She never had dreamed of having a real monkey going with her on a picnic. Wisp looked wistfully at Christine whose yellow braids bobbed excitedly as she talked to her cousin and Foggy. Beryl had suggested that they drive out the Stillorgan Road as far as her adventure and then go cross country to the other road which would bring them to the sea and to Dalkey. Foggy agreed and so they were soon trotting along the firm, open road, under a sky as blue as the day Christine went with her friends on the sail down the Liffey. Jumbles trotted along at a great rate and they came to the open place where Beryl had had the puncture before they knew it. She was astonished to find it was not at all as far as she had thought.

"Turn down the crossroad at the next turnin', Foggy," directed Wisp and then she said to herself, "I want 'em to come on the sea sudden like!"

The crossroad was like a lane and so fragrant that it seemed as though it were a garden at midsummer. There was the breath of fresh-budded wild roses, the sweetness of sun-warmed bracken and

brush. Then mingled with all this suddenly was the fresh tang of the sea. They came upon it as unexpectedly as Wisp had wished. It flashed a blue and gold welcome to them and they cried out and waved their hands toward it.

"We might have asked Miss Nina, but maybe she wouldn't have fancied comin'," said Wisp as they watched the glitter of the sun on the water and breathed in the message of the rollicking wind.

"She would be bothering about what her aunt would say all the time," Beryl answered.

"Yes, it's better to have Nina another time. We must be sure to be back by six so Pecky won't worry. What would she say if she could see us now!" laughed Christine.

"My dear, we are far too old to be tied to the apron strings of a governess all the time. It's perfect nonsense. I'm old enough to look after you all, if necessary. Goodness, any one would think we were all Patrick's age!" sniffed Beryl, and she went on briskly: "Let's forget Fitzwilliam Square and Pecky and all the stoggy things and have fun. I for one am not going to worry about anything. I'm going to enjoy life!"

"So am I," agreed Joan, and Patrick called out boisterously, "You bet I am!"

Jumbles did not seem in the least tired as he trotted into the little village of Dalkey. The main street was almost deserted. Back from the road in the midst of an old churchyard stood the jagged ruins of

a church, such an ancient church that it must have been just a ruin for centuries.

Foggy pulled Jumbles up in front of a livery stable at the corner of the street and asked a man who stood in the doorway if Johnny McCarthy were anywhere about. For answer the man raised his voice calling, "Johnny!" and a shock-headed boy appeared from the back of the stable, greeted Foggy cordially, and consented to take them all over to the island in his boat. Foggy's face was wreathed in smiles as he turned to the others after a whispered consultation with his friend.

"He's his boat below and he'll take us over. Good luck for us!" he exclaimed. Before they knew it they had said good-by to Jumbles who was to wait for them in a stable and all, including Blighty and the lunch baskets, were packed into Johnny's boat and starting off to the island. Johnny's father, the stable man, had not approved of the expedition.

"It ain't no day for takin' a pack o' kids across there. The sun ain't goin' to stay all day ye can mind that. What kind o' a butcher boy is that Foggy? Why ain't he in the city tendin' to his work 'stead o' drivin' way out here?"

No one had minded Mr. McCarthy's ill temper and they started across in high spirits. Johnny was to row them over and come for them again at five o'clock. It was then three and they would have two hours on the island: the blue-gray, enchanted-looking island that lay before them, Wisp's island that

she loved next best to Fairy Cottage. Her eyes shone with the joy of taking her new friends to see it and helping them to know it.

The sea was purple and green and the sky as blue as Wisp's eyes. The wind whisked about their faces as the boat began to dip down, down, and then, up and up. There was no doubt but that it was very rough. The advance guard of a March wind was with them and the sea seemed a part of the rollicking, happy day. It was free and boisterous and naughty. It flapped and swished and roared.

"Sit tight, please, all of yez," ordered Foggy. He was a little fearful of the adventure. It was all very well driving them out a pleasant road to Dalkey, but it was another thing to cross in this wild sea to the strange island beyond, an island where there were no houses and, this time of year, no picnickers but themselves. Christine shut her eyes and held on tight. She felt a little dizzy and afraid, but she was able to look about her after a little and in spite of everything she felt the wonder of the sea. Beryl gloried in it all and sang as they dipped and plunged. She and Wisp and perhaps Johnny were the only ones in the boat who did enjoy the row. Wisp was perched on the bow, her hair flying in the wind behind her. She was far away in thought from Jeffers Court, even from the rowboat and her friends. She was in the depths of a scraggy rock, swimming with mermaids!

Blighty was very difficult. He was frightened and instead of crouching under Patrick's jacket, he wanted to be free. He struggled and scolded, waving his paws frantically, and Victoria and Joan had to help hold him, talking to him severely in Hindoostani. They were all glad when they reached the island and gave Johnny a pressing invitation to stay, but he said his father had work for him to do. He was a rather stupid boy of fourteen. No one was sorry that he could not stay.

The first hour on the island passed by like a flash. It was a splendid hour! They were so happy just in running about exploring, and drinking in the tang of the air. The sun was almost hot and the wind, though wild, was mild enough. The grass was vividly green, and all about them was the dancing swirl of the sea!

Christine threw up her arms and exclaimed: "Oh, I'm so happy this afternoon I don't know what to do! Isn't this fun, fun, fun? We're here on the island for a picnic. It's a sort of wonder afternoon! If Beryl wouldn't make her usual remark that I'll never grow up, I'd say let's pretend we've had a spell cast on us and that we can't leave this island until a fairy prince comes to rescue us!"

"Well, we can't unless Johnny comes for us in the rowboat," laughed Joan.

"That's so, I hadn't thought of that," answered Christine, trying to untie one of the heavy strings about the luncheon basket she had been carrying.

Beryl came running up to them full of plans and excitement.

"We've found the most wonderful place! Come, girls. We're going to explore around the other side and then have tea almost on the sea, we can get so close to it. Isn't it dandy here? You and Joan take that basket between you. I'm helping Foggy gather sticks for a fire so we can boil the kettle later. There's a tower over there, a Martello tower. Foggy knows about it. It's almost as old as Ireland, and Rob Roy and other outlaws used to hide in it." Beryl talked busily as the three went on across the rolling, bracken-covered ground.

They watched the sea and the distant ships from the Martello tower and they found a tiny ruin clustered among rocks and ferns. They did not know what it was then. Afterward they found out that it was the ruin of a little oratory which centuries ago had been dedicated to a saint named Benedict.

They had tea around the fire which Foggy had built in a very sheltered corner of a rock and Wisp suggested that each one of them tell something. So Victoria told about a dawn picnic in the Himalayas; Joan told about a fair she had gone to at Hyderabad; Beryl, of a basket-ball game at school; Christine, about making friends with a sailor on the boat coming over and some of the odd things he told her about the sea, and Patrick about how he first met Blighty. Wisp told this:

"As we're a-tellin' of things that was after hap-

penin', maybe you'd like to hear o' a dream o' mine, for it was about this island. 'Twas soon after Foggy brought Peg and me out here on a holiday and it seemed so real, like it was true, so maybe you'll forgit 'twas but a dream. I thought I was here on the island and it was most dark and I was all alone, but I wasn't scared like, for there was a few stars and the sea. I was a-walking close to the little ruin, and sudden like I saw a light and in the archway there was some one dressed in a long robe. I walked on for a bit and I went into the tower and there was some one in a dark cloak and a wide hat with a long red feather. He was hidin' in a corner! 'Twas Rob Roy maybe! Then sudden like I woke up!"

"My, how funny, Wisp! Doesn't the bread and butter taste good in this air? It's a little chilly and I vote that we have a game of hide and seek or tag or something after tea," said Beryl, and Christine laughed.

"Well, as long as you suggested it and it isn't too childish we will," she answered.

Foggy was looking off toward the mainland. "It do be a good hour over time," he said, and his round freckled face looked worried.

"An hour over time. Why, Foggy, what do you mean?" gasped Beryl.

"Ye can't mean it! It's because o' the wonderful time!" This from Wisp.

"We'd better pack the baskets and be all ready!" suggested Beryl, and they all started to do so for it

was growing dusky, and the darkness would fall suddenly when it came.

"Goodness, what will Pecky say? This is dreadful," Christine said to Victoria. "But it's fun, though," she added.

It was some time before everything was packed up and in readiness, and it was quite dark, but the black spot on the water which would mean Johnny and the rowboat did not appear. It was late and dark and growing cold. The mainland seemed very far away under the starlight. Johnny had played them false and there was nothing to look forward to but a night on the island.

XVIII.—The Night on the Island

It dawned on all of them at once. The fact that they had been forgotten by Johnny, or at any rate the fact that he would not be crossing for them that night, was plain to each one of them.

"It's Johnny's pa! He's a-sendin' of him on errands. Ain't it awful?" Foggy's face seemed to lose some of its roundness in his anxiety, as he looked from one to the other of them in his despair.

They stood, all of them in a group, the packed lunch baskets in their midst. Darkness had quite fallen and except for the faint sounds of life from the mainland and the cry of a sea mew, there was no sound but the swish of the sea and the soft rush of wind through the bracken.

Beryl was the first to speak.

"Now cheer up, all of you! What a dismal crowd we are. There's no use in crying about this. Just because for once something has really happened that isn't connected with Pecky or lessons or stupidity, you all look as though the world had come to an end." She turned toward Wisp as she spoke and she saw that her eyes were shining.

"Wisp is happy," went on Beryl, and as she spoke she put her arm about the little figure. For the first time they were drawn together and it was because of their understanding of the adventure.

"Don't you see," Wisp said softly, and as she spoke she looked at Foggy's worried face and smiled, "it do be a rare thing this, a fine wild happy time? It's the sea and the stars and all outdoors at night and us friendly like, all of us together!" She lifted her hands above her head and looked up, still smiling at the sky.

"We must make plans and have system about it all. Let's look the facts in the face. We must stay here for the night and we might just as well not worry and have a good time. As far as I'm concerned it's more fun than anything that's happened in a long time. Let's see what we have! Well, there's the rug and the two pillows that I thought of the last moment!" Beryl paused, looking down at the various things spread about on the ground at their feet.

"There are the two extra sweaters and we brought our extra coats," put in Christine.

Beryl sat down on the ground and began to open the biggest basket.

"We can build a big fire, Miss Beryl. That will help to keep us warm," said Foggy, cheering up at Beryl's cheerful outlook of the situation.

"That will be splendid," Victoria answered him as Beryl nodded her head affirmatively, struggling with a knot in the string about the basket.

"I'll be after findin' the biggest fagots there is and buildin' a rare big fire," announced Foggy, glad to have something to do.

"They may see it from the mainland and come for us," suggested Beryl, opening up the basket and taking stock of the contents.

"I thought o' that, miss, but look off and see. The mist came sudden like after the darkness," Foggy answered, pointing off to the frail gray cloud-like curtain between them and Dalkey.

They all followed the direction of his finger and saw too plainly that what he said was true. They were indeed prisoners on an old island where the sea murmured all about them and the first rays of the moon gilded the ruin of the little oratory as old as the age of the Druids.

Joan began to laugh and then they all laughed, and from then on it all became adventure and each one set out to do his or her share in making it a jolly time.

"It really is a lark, you know. It's going to be wonderful fun! Cheer up, Blighty, you certainly look as glum as a funeral. The rest of us are going to enjoy life." Beryl gave the monkey's head a brisk little pat as she spoke.

"He's cold!" Patrick tried not to speak anxiously, but he was very much concerned about his pet.

"Oh, when we're all sitting around the fire he will warm up. Foggy is piling up mounds of fagots and we can have a splendid fire that will last all night. It's quite safe here between the rocks and we'll be as cozy as can be," Christine assured him. She was really excited and ready for all the fun they could think of. She put her arm around Patrick and gave him a little hug. He was such a little boy and just then looked so old-fashioned, holding Blighty close in his arms and looking up earnestly into his cousin's face.

"You see, he's always lived where it's warm. Even in the hills it was never like this," he said to Christine.

"Come here everybody and listen to me please," commanded Beryl and they all clustered about her, Foggy resting a moment from his fagot hunting.

"I've looked everything over and we're better off than I thought. There's a loaf of bread and Cook's loaves are big ones, and there's butter. It's splendid that we decided to have a real country tea.

There's nearly a quarter of that huge jar of apricot jam left and some milk. The cake is gone, but it wasn't very good. We have the frying pan, but as we've nothing to fry that isn't much good to us!" Beryl gazed at it wistfully. They had fried eggs on it over the fire for tea.

"Beggin' yer pardon, Miss Beryl, I've a bit o' supper in me pocket. I was after buyin' it for Kathleen and me, thinkin' we'd have it at home after a seein' of ye all safe back to the Square." There was a little choke in Foggy's voice. He felt very deeply his responsibility and it seemed to him that he had failed in taking proper care of the Fitzwilliam Square children. Like the others he had become engrossed in the careless holiday afternoon and he had never for a moment dreamed that Johnny would not come rowing across for them at five o'clock as he had promised to do.

He drew a package from his pocket and handed it to Beryl, who opened it and gave an exclamation of satisfaction.

"Bacon, that's just the thing! We can cook it on sticks over the fire the way we do at home on picnics. I'm so glad you had it, Foggy, and you mustn't worry. None of this is your fault. We all trusted Johnny and he failed us. We might have known he would, he's such a stupid-looking boy. It's too bad about Pecky. I'm really sorry to have her worry. I hope she won't telegraph to Uncle James!" As she spoke the last words Beryl sat back leaning on her hands

and in spite of the consternation on the faces of the others, she laughed.

Victoria put her hands in the pockets of her blue jacket and walked off a little way from the others. This last speech of Beryl's had stirred her deeply. What would Uncle James think? The whole situation was extraordinary. She had meant to tell Miss Peck when they returned in the evening. She knew that Wisp had planned the picnic to help things a little, to take them all out into the sunshine for the day. They had left a note for Miss Peck, saying simply that they were all off for some afternoon's fun and would be back in time for dinner. Had she found word from Uncle James when she came back from seeing her friend? Poor Pecky, it was indeed a shame to worry her, but that seemed a small part compared with the suspense and anxiety about Major Langsley. Victoria was not sure but what she had done very wrong in keeping the news secret, but as she stood there under the stars she knew that she had meant to do right and that brought her a certain comfort.

Some one called her and she ran back to the others and was busy at once helping to carry things over to the far edge of the island. It was a sheltered place and on the side that was farthest away from the mainland. They had agreed that as they were shut in by the fog it would be more interesting to be off at the far end, quite away from sight or sound of land.

"It will be just as though we were on a desert island, leagues away from anything," Victoria said delightedly as they began to arrange their camping place.

"It'll be like them old days so long ago before there was any folks but Druids about over there on the land," put in Wisp, smiling across at Victoria, a teapot in one hand and a pillow in the other.

"Oh, this is fun!" exclaimed Joan, hopping about in sheer glee. She was not as concerned as the others as to what "they" would say, "they" meaning Pecky and Uncle James and others in authority.

"Glory! I just happened to think of Mrs. Mink. She will be more horrified than any one," laughed Beryl.

"That's so, she will and I'm glad of it," agreed Patrick, who could not forgive the housekeeper for disliking Blighty.

Meanwhile Foggy had been busy with pillows and extra sweaters and had contrived a sort of cave-like shelter among the rocks. His fire was burning bravely and there was fuel to last the night. They had portioned off the food and found that with the hunk of cold bacon which could be sliced and fried they could make out very well for supper and breakfast.

Victoria made Patrick put on his coat and her muffler. He was looking pale and she knew that though he did not say so, he was cold. As a matter of fact although night had fallen and they no longer had the

friendly comfort of the sun, the wind had died down with the coming of the fog and in their shelter among the rocks they were fairly comfortable. The moon beamed upon them and seemed to say: "Children, children, I've looked down on this island many a time, but never before did I see anything like you at this hour. I've only seen the bracken and the rocks and the old tower and the ruin. This is a new sight for me, but I think I like it!"

Victoria cut the bacon in delicate slices and they found that there would be enough left for breakfast. Beryl and Foggy used their pocket knives to put pointed edges on the sticks and each one cooked their own slices of bacon over the fire. It was a good while since tea and they were all as hungry as could be. There were three slices of bread for each, saving the same amount for breakfast. Wisp gave one of her slices to Joan who was so hungry she couldn't talk. Foggy grew more cheerful as the jolly impromptu meal progressed and some of the care that had clouded his face gave place to enjoyment. After all, as Wisp had said, they were out under the stars with all outdoors around them.

Wisp was very quiet throughout the meal and, after it was finished, sat with her hands folded looking off at the moon-touched sea and the dim silence beyond it. Christine in watching her saw the same expression on her face that had been there when they had sailed down the Liffey.

"Tell us something, Wisp," she said softly.

Wisp smiled and turned her head toward Christine. Then she looked off again at the quiet sea.

"I was a-thinkin' just then o' somethin' Auntie Moneypenny was after a-tellin' me about." She hesitated and then looked appealingly at the girls. "I've had three lessons and I speak as bad as ever. Me tongue is all twisted like," she said apologetically.

"We like the way you speak, it's nicer than our way," said Joan, and they all laughed and Christine looked at Joan approvingly.

"That's true, Joan. I like her way the best," she said.

"Go on with your story please, Wisp," requested Victoria, and although she shrugged her shoulder and sighed a little impatiently, she took Blighty in her arms as Patrick held him out to her and sheltered him under the cape she wore over her jacket.

"It wasn't a story maybe, Miss Victoria. It's somethin' that did happen longer ago than when the ruin over there was built. It was Easter Eve I was a-thinkin' of and it was the year 433," Wisp answered her.

"It couldn't be as long ago as that, Wisp—why, that's in the dark ages," put in Beryl.

Wisp still looked dreamily off at the sea and sky.

"It was dark, yes. That was what I was a-thinkin' of. It was all dark," she said.

"Don't be so mysterious. Tell us about it, do!" Christine put her hand in Wisp's and gave it a little squeeze as she spoke.

"It was about Saint Patrick I was a-thinkin' of, about his comin' to Ireland, right to the heart of it, to the—the—" Wisp paused, wrinkling her brow, trying to think of the word. "What is that doty word auntie was a-tellin' me?" she murmured.

"Pagan?" suggested Beryl.

"That's it, pagan. He come a-sailin' up Dublin Bay and it was on Easter Eve. He was cold and tired and it was very dark and a-rainin'. It was the night before the great feast of Tamhair and no light was let to shine in the whole o' Ireland, for it was the time o' the Druids, men as was a-prayin' to idols, and until the king was after a-lightin' o' the fire on the green rath at Tara no human bein' could put a flint to their home fire or anywheres about. You may be sure it was dark that March Easter Eve, some such a night like to-night it was, but there wasn't a bit o' a moon."

"Goodness, Wisp, isn't it sort of creepy, what you're telling us?" asked Beryl with a little laugh.

Wisp shook her head. "No, it's beautiful," she answered.

"Vic, let me have Blighty now," said Patrick.

"You'd better let me keep him, Paddy. He's warm and comfy here under my cape." Victoria smiled at her brother and he settled back again against a rock and was asleep before he knew it. It had been a long day for Patrick and he could not keep awake even to hear what Wisp was telling them. Foggy

put his coat over his little friend and then Christine said eagerly, "Do go on, Wisp."

"I don't believe I'll sleep a wink to-night. I'm not the least bit in the world sleepy," whispered Joan to her sister.

"Saint Patrick and his few friends came a-sailin' along up Dublin Bay and as I was a-sayin', it was a March night like to-night. They camped where they could see the Hill o' Tara and there in the midst o' darkness, deep loomy darkness, they lit a fire." Wisp was silent after she said the last and her eyes were shining. There was no sound except the soft flap of the waves against the rocks.

"He was sent for to come to Tara, and they say that many a miracle was after happenin'. Saint Patrick had such a way with him, o' peace and light, that even Leary the king was after givin' up fightin' about his comin', and he was glad enough to git help with laws and other things. What I like best is his a-comin' that way at night, in the dark, Easter Eve, too, and darin' to build a big brush fire right where the Druids was a-worshipin' of their idols," Wisp went on.

How strange it was! All of them were on the lonely island listening to a tale about Saint Patrick who had sailed the very waters that sang about them there in the moonlight! Victoria sat next to Wisp, and when the others were moving about after she had finished her little story, she whispered to her:

"They don't know about their father. Doesn't

it seem almost wrong not to have told them? They will have to know," and Wisp answered her:

"It was right happenin' this way, I think. They'll have this bit to remember before the trouble comes. I was a-thinkin' o' it all a-lookin' up at the stars just now."

Foggy was almost as tired as Patrick and had curled up under the rock beside him and was asleep. The girls decided to walk up and down for they were stiff and cold and not sleepy. They were careful not to go out of sight of the camp as they called it, for they knew that if they were lost they would not find it easy to retrace their steps. They went down close to the sea and after they had thrown pebbles out into the water and sung a number of songs, they lay down with their cloaks around them, and before they knew it were asleep.

The sun was hot on their faces when they awoke. They sat up, all four of them, almost at once and saw what had awakened them. It was a rowboat coming rapidly toward the island and the calls from the boat and Foggy's eager answers had brought them out of dreamland. Some one had come to rescue them, and an instant later Victoria gave a shout and waved her hands and arms calling, "Keith! Keith! Keith!"

It was true, though they could hardly believe it. There in the boat, rowing with all his might, was Keith and as soon as he was within earshot he called, "It's all right!"

"Good news," and almost before he reached the shore it seemed he was in their midst and was patting Beryl and Christine on the shoulders so energetically that they did not know what to make of it.

"It's all right! I came over to tell you all about it; caught a boat that reached Kingstown this morning. Uncle James wanted to come himself, though of course he wired at once. Uncle Charles is safe, quite safe, and the cable said, 'Condition rapidly improving.' "

Beryl and Christine looked at him in such surprise that they could not speak. They had thought that he had been sent to find them all and instead of showing any surprise at their situation he was talking to them about their father's being safe. Before they could speak Victoria burst into tears and, sitting down on the rock nearest her, buried her face in her hands and sobbed:

"They didn't know! I didn't tell them! I couldn't! I saw the wires when they came! I have them in my pocket now! Oh, I'm so happy! I am so glad now I didn't tell!"

It was some time before all was understood. Each one explained in turn, and Beryl and Christine knew, after it was all over, what suspense and anxiety their relatives had been in. Above all, they knew that their father had been in grave danger, but had been found at last and, though wounded, was out of danger.

When the first excitement and explanations were over Keith listened to their story of the holiday ride and the row to the island, of Johnny's desertion and their having been all night camping out. He then told them of having met the culprit Johnny, at Kingstown. Keith had helped him with two very heavy valises that he was carrying up from the boat, for it was his usual task to meet the boats at Kingstown, the next station to Dalkey. He told Keith that he must hurry home and row over to Dalkey Island where he had rowed a party of children the afternoon before; a party of little ladies and a boy, and his friend Foggy and a girl with fly-away gold hair and a monkey. His father had sent him on an errand and he had been so sleepy that he had quite forgotten them all. He was sure they would be mad with him, and indeed he did not blame them, for it would be a rare ghostly thing, spending a night on Dalkey Island.

"When he said a girl with fly-away hair and a monkey I guessed at once. I told him to bring me here, and made him give me the boat to row over for you. I say, you've fallen into a nice scrape. Wait till Uncle James hears about it all!" Keith was beginning to be quite worked up about the affair now that he began to think it over, but he was very hungry and agreed with the others that they had better have breakfast before doing anything else. He was soon cooking a piece of bacon over the fire, listening to their adventures and laugh-

ing over Blighty, who looked bored and cross and evidently preferred Fitzwilliam Square to the island.

While the others were cooking breakfast Beryl and Christine went off alone talking gravely of their father. They were filled with deep gratitude not only for his safety and for the good news of his definite recovery from his wounds, but also because Victoria had not told them and they had been spared what would otherwise have been for them the saddest forty-eight hours they had ever known. Their hearts were so full of gratitude that they did not even stop to wonder what welcome would await them all at home.

XIX.—The Fairy Hill

It was a sort of *Alice In Wonderland* morning! The row across to Dalkey, Keith at the oars, and Blighty watching him from the bow, saying good-by to Wisp and Foggy and Jumbles as they rode off toward the city in the butcher's cart. Then the uninteresting train journey on to Dublin, and the arrival at the Square!

Foggy had shown such concern about the whole thing that Keith had slapped him on the shoulder and said, "Don't worry, old man. You're not to blame!" As for Wisp, she was so happy about the news of Major Langsley that she could think of nothing else, and as she turned for a last wave of the hand to the others her face shone with joy.

"Perhaps the star helped to find them!" she said to Foggy on the way home.

Foggy, who was used to her odd remarks, was not surprised at what she said, and exclaimed for himself: "They do be a good lot, all o' 'em. Blighty and all! Not a word o' blame and all of 'em cheerful like. I ain't a-goin' to let 'em think I ain't ready to take a scoldin'. I'm goin' myself to the governess lady and tell her just how it was."

"I'm a-goin', too," said Wisp.

The home-coming was not as dreadful as they had expected. Miss Peck had spent an anxious night, but she had known that whatever had happened there was safety in numbers and that they must be all together somewhere. She waited until morning before deciding just what to do, and they were all at the house before eight o'clock, explanations were given and the muddle was straightened out. The governess had been dazed by Uncle James's wire which had come very late the night before, and like the others was so thankful at the happy outcome of the trouble connected with the father of Beryl and Christine that she, too, felt the escapade to have been only an incident.

Everything else was swallowed up in relief over Major Langsley and except for Mrs. Mink's horror, which was unbounded, the adventure passed over without any undue excitement. Foggy and Wisp did go to Miss Peck, and they found her as kindly and understanding as she had been on Christmas Eve.

"There really isn't any reason for keeping it a secret from Pecky about Wisp's lessons. She would be glad to help her, too," Joan said one evening a little later.

"All the fun would be gone if it wasn't a secret," the others had assured her, and she had to admit this to be true.

Keith had returned to school the day after he came over. There had been another reassuring cable about Major Langsley and things had settled down again to normal. Rainy days came along as April drew near, but it was a soft, warm rain that nobody minded. The hawthorn trees in the garden were deeply pink and pearly white, violets peeped up through the grass, and golden tulips danced in the gentle breeze all along the foot of the old brick wall.

Blighty was in his element now, spending hours in the garden, scaling the wall and spending much of his time gibbering at an irate terrier in the next garden. His favorite tree was the hawthorn tree close to the Secret Room window and he would swing himself up into its sweet fragrance whenever the spirit moved him.

They had one or two meetings in the Secret Room, but out-of-doors called them so urgently that interest waned, and at the second meeting Wisp made this suggestion:

"Maybe the best o' the weather will be after waning a bit. Might we be havin' the next lesson off

in the outdoors? I have it—Kilmaslogue! I told ye," she turned toward Christine as she spoke. "I told ye o' the fairy hill. It's just out Rathfarnham way. If the governess lady would be after trustin' us we could go!"

Kilmaslogue! The fairy hill! They would go for a long day and they would find out more of Ireland. The island had taught them something and they wanted to know more. Spring was calling them and they would go!

It was not so easy to persuade Miss Peck that it was right for them to go off for the whole afternoon. They decided to tell her and oddly enough it was Beryl who persuaded her.

"Don't you see, Pecky, that we must go? Why, we're just beginning to find out what Ireland is! We must have adventures. I, for one, hope we'll have a great many. No harm came of our being on the island. We've heard from Wisp of Kilmaslogue and we must see it." Beryl spoke firmly.

Miss Peck smiled, but she said, "I can't see what you find so interesting about the little Cuff Street girl. I'm sure your Uncle James would not approve of her at all."

In spite of her objections Miss Peck gave her consent and even persuaded Aunt Witheringhaugh to allow Nina to join them.

"As they say, they are really old enough to look after themselves and there are so many of them. A picnic near Rathfarnham cannot bring them any

harm and they seem so set upon going." The governess did not mention Wisp and Foggy, for she knew that Aunt Witheringhaugh was an eccentric and fussy woman, and she might very much disapprove of Nina's knowing a little girl and boy who lived in a place called Jeffers Court. Miss Peck had heard them singing Christmas Eve and, though she had not admitted it, she herself had rather a soft place in her heart for them.

They had a consultation in the Secret Room about the picnic, on whether or not they should ask Miss Peck.

"I believe she would love to come and we could let her sit and knit while we roam off and do as we like," suggested Christine.

"I think, personally, that it would be simply flat," said Beryl.

"So do I," agreed Victoria, and as Christine thought so herself in her inmost heart, nothing more was said about the governess joining them.

"She's a dear about Wisp. I mean she was really awfully nice about the island and all, but she does think it's odd, our wanting to do things with her. What would she say if she knew of the lessons and all?" Joan peered out of the Secret Room window as she spoke.

Christine came and stood beside her looking out. Instead of the bare trees and brown garden beds they saw the cheerful rows of gold and red tulips and the glory of the hawthorn trees.

"To-morrow we're really going out to see the spring," Christine said half to herself.

To-morrow was a blue-gray day, more blue than gray. It was gold, too, and as they drove behind Jumbles toward Rathfarnham it seemed as though it was only golden, for all along the way were laburnum trees in full bloom, trailing their yellow branches to the ground.

They sat in the cart in the same order as before except that Nina, resplendent in an ugly new blue dress, "just the wrong color, poor child, but she didn't know it," as Beryl said afterward to Christine, sat between Christine and Victoria on the board back of the seat. Nina was bewildered by the whole experience. She never tired of hearing about the island and knew each incident by heart. To have actually had such an adventure seemed to her impossible beyond words; to be jogging along in a butcher's cart toward something that they called a "fairy hill" was in itself something almost impossible to fathom!

Children called to them from the roadside as they passed through Rathfarnham, waving their hands and running along beside the cart. Foggy flourished his whip at them good-naturedly, then turning to the right they drove around the edge of the village and at once found themselves on a country highway with the faint gray blue of mountains ahead of them, on either side of them green meadows laughing in the sunshine.

"Hear the brook! It's going right along with us. Isn't it precious?" exclaimed Victoria.

"Stop, will ye please, Foggy?" said Wisp, and her friend obediently drew rein. Wisp was out of the cart in a flash and running over to the silver, gurgling, twisting stream that bordered in zigzag fashion the right side of the road, she knelt and gathered something, coming back and holding out a mass of pale gold blossoms to her friends.

"Primroses! This is where they're after startin' and we'll have 'em with us from now on all the rest o' the way. They do be havin' their mornin' wash. See their wee faces is wet!" Wisp laughed delightedly as she laid her offering gently in Christine's lap.

It seemed as though the primroses brought them such sudden joy that from then on they were ready for any happy thing that might come their way. They may have been driving in a butcher cart down a sunny country road, but it seemed more as though they were swinging along a golden way to fairyland. The winding yellow border of the brook stayed with them all the way. There was an archway of pink and white may above them and the hill which towered beyond them held a hint of mystery. Kilmaslogue! Known since the beginning of time, almost, as the fairy hill!

Foggy tethered Jumbles to a tree when they came to the foot of the hill, but he gave him plenty of room to roam about and nibble the sweet young

grass. Then, carrying the two heaviest baskets, he started to show them the way up the hill. Wisp ran in front of him looking back and smiling.

"I do dream o' showin' them the hill. Let me lead the way," she said, and like a woodland sprite she was always just a little ahead of them during the gradual climb up Kilmaslogue.

Foggy gave a hand to each in turn, putting down his baskets and helping them over a rough place here and there, but Wisp did not need his help. She knew every inch of the way and loved it. As she took Christine's hand to help her once she whispered:

"I'm a-thankin' o' the star in me heart. I was after sayin' to it as how I wanted to show ye the fairy hill."

They stopped before they reached the top, deciding to go on up later on; to roam about and do just as they liked for the rest of the day. They chose a hollow high up overlooking a vast sweep of country. All about them on each side and at the back was the forest, and from their resting place they could see the sunlit wood aisles and hear the scamper of wild wood things, startled by their arrival. Beyond where the sunshine could not penetrate there was a sweep of gold, a wild stretch of primroses and cowslips helping with their gentle loveliness to lighten the somber gloom.

Blighty was in far better humor than he had been on the Dalkey adventure and sat quietly gazing about

him as though he, too, realized that this hill was different from any other and that there was enchantment in the spring air. Foggy had thought of something which proved to be a great help in bringing Blighty up the hill. He persuaded him to sit on top of the baskets he was carrying, and it worked very well, for he sat good-naturedly where Foggy put him, and though Patrick walked beside him expecting every moment that he would swing off on some tempting branch, he did not do so.

They stayed in the hollow for a long time. It was so beautiful, just there, and it was Ireland in the spring. As far as they could see all down the hill toward the blue-shadowed valleys were mists of pink and white, a mingling of deep rose and palest pink, cherry trees and apple trees and always the pink and white may. Below the pearly sunset-colored trees were drifts of gold and deep flashes of blue, shading here and there to gray and mauve and purple as wild violets mingled with the unearthly brilliance of a first carpet of bluebells.

Foggy knew there was no place in the world as beautiful as Kilmaslogue in April, but he had been up since five o'clock and he had carried a heavy load up the hill after a long morning's work. He was so sleepy that, after a hasty glance at the glory all about him, he put his cap over his eyes and went to sleep. Blighty settled down beside him and after blinking one eye followed his example and was asleep almost as quickly. They lay under a pale

rose hawthorn bush, with baskets around them, and in their way enjoyed the beginning of the holiday afternoon as much as the others.

Patrick was not in the least sleepy and would have liked to go on up to the top of the hill at once. As it was a straight path from the hollow to the top and they could see him now and then through the trees as he climbed, Victoria told him he could go on up if he liked as long as he was not out of earshot. They were all glad to have him go, for when he was excited he asked a great many questions and was noisy.

It was so warm in the early afternoon sun that they did not need their jackets and lay back on the soft moss, propping themselves against two stalwart oaks that stood guard in their hollow.

Almost before she realized what she said Christine turned to Wisp, who sat a little in the shadow, looking off at the vast stretches of light and shadow that swept over the soft valleys below, and as Christine watched her she saw that her eyes were filled with great wistfulness, and that there was about her the look as though she were dreaming and weaving fancies; it was the look that had been with her on the barge.

"Won't you tell us something, Wisp?" asked Christine.

Wisp nodded and lifting her arm swept it slowly, pointing off toward the south.

"That way beyond them mountains is Wicklow

and Kilkenny, Arlow and Wexford. If we was after havin' the eyes we could see north to Ulster and west as far as the Shannon. Some day I'm goin' to see all o' Ireland—everything!" She looked off as though trying to see, far away, more of the beauty of the country that she loved.

"Tell us something else, Wisp," begged Joan, and Wisp smiled as she answered her.

"I'll gladly tell ye a tale I made up in me mind one night in Fairy Cottage if it is that ye all would wish to hear."

"Tell us, please! That's splendid!" was the girls' reply.

"It's too bad for Foggy and Patrick not to hear it," said Joan.

"Foggy, he knows it well, Miss Joan, and here comes Master Patrick a-runnin' down the path," Wisp answered.

Soon they were all sitting still in the sunshine, listening, and this is the story that Wisp had made up in Fairy Cottage and which she told to them that afternoon on the fairy hill:

THE BOG AND THE HILL

"For twenty miles or so off toward the west it's country like this. Then comes a long, wide bog. I ain't seen it. I ain't been that far, but I'm a-goin' all round that way some time. The land about there is sad like and gray, and though all round it

is the grand country it do be lonely like. I was a-thinkin' o' it one day up here last spring and it was that same night at home I was after makin' up the tale.

"I ain't goin' to say, 'Once on a time,' for me story is these times now.

"There's a nice farmhouse off River Shannon way and in it lives a big family named McCarthy. There do be seven children in the family, but the ones the story is about is Shan and Sheila and they do be twins. The story is about what happened to 'em last year and the fairies in it is the kind that is round nowadays. Shan and Sheila always played together. They was fond o' each other's company and they didn't see much o' the rest o' their brothers and sisters.

"One evenin' last spring after milkin' time (my, but I'd like to have a cow o' me own) they was a sittin' each with a jug o' new milk and a chunk o' soda bread on a low stony hedge at the far end of their father's farm. Sudden like, they saw a girl comin' toward them and she had on a brown dress. She was a-carryin' of a bowl as blue as the sky. She was about their own age, maybe ten, or so. In the bowl was strawberries as red as sunset after a heavy rain. She held out the bowl to them and says sweet like, 'Take some o' the berries, won't ye?'

"And they each took a handful and ate 'em and, before they knew it, they was a-walkin' with the girl

far along the road. They must have walked a good bit for it all looked strange like, dark and bleak, and then they thought o' the bog that lay way beyond their father's land, and which they was forbidden to go near for it was all marshy like, and dark and bad. The gold furze it tried to bloom there every year, but it died and the wild fowl made strange cries as they flew across it.

"Sheila cried out, 'The ground is after gettin' soft. We're near the bog, but how did we come so far?'

"And Shan cried, 'She walked so fast she brought us to the bog.'

"Then Sheila cried, 'I'm slippin' in. I want to git out.'

"And the girl in the brown dress with the blue bowl o' strawberries laughed mean like, and calls out to 'em: 'Ye're in Bogland where Guiderwack is king! He has sent for ye and ye're to come to Black Castle to live!'

" 'Twas true enough! There ahead o' 'em was a tall black castle and on the top o' it was a tower. Before they knew it they was walkin' into the court and goin' up the stairs, and the girl in the brown dress took them into a big room, and on a kind o' throne sat Guiderwack!"

Wisp glanced at Patrick, who was watching her open-eyed.

"The happy part comes soon. It ain't all black and gianty," she reassured him.

"I like the gloomy part," said Patrick stoutly.

"Guiderwack was big, like all giants, and he had a round face. He was dressed in red and his face was so high up that his voice sounded a long way off. He was after a-tellin' Sheila and Shan as how they must keep all the rules in Bogland and it would be the worse for them if they didn't. He told them they would have to go out and bring in children the way the girl in the brown dress was after doin'. Then he waved his hand and told 'em to go out.

"They was sad days for the two o' 'em. It was all gray and dark and they had black bread to eat. One day Sheila said to Shan, 'If I could but sleep in me own bed and see me mother! If I could but sip a cup o' cocoa!'

"One day the girl in the brown dress whom they liked a little bit after they knew her said the giant wanted them to go out and bring in some children to Bogland, and because they would not go they was shut up in the tower. They looked out o' the window and for the first time they was able to see high up, and they saw a lovely hill like this one. It was all red and purple and gold with the gorse and heather, and up at the very top o' it a light was shinin'. They watched the light and with all their hearts they was a-wishin' they was over there on the lovely hill.

"Sudden like, the light began to move, and after a bit, 'stead o' just bein' a tiny gold light, it was bigger like a bird, and soon it came so close they

could see it was a strange creature, and when it flew right up to their window it spoke to them.

" 'I'm called Whizz, dear children, and I'm the airship o' the Fairy Queen. For many a moon I've watched this window for to come and take Guiderwack's captives to the fairy hill, but they always obey the giant and go out and bring in other children and so we cannot help them. Ye are the first ones as has refused to go out after children, and to reward ye the Fairy Queen has sent me for ye.' As Whizz spoke he kind o' bumped against the window and the bars fell away.

"Before they knew it, Shan and Sheila was a-sittin' on the Whizz's back, flyin' through the air, and it was just grand to be floatin' along with Bogland and Black Castle and Guiderwack gettin' farther and farther away. It was fine landin' on the top o' the fairy hill with all the sky and the heather and the fairies, wee, silver-winged fairies, each one o' 'em prettier than the last. They spent a week there dancin' and eatin' fairy buns and cocoa out o' gold cups, and meetin' all the strange, nice fairy folks up and down the hill. Then one day they said they wanted to go home, so they said good-by to the queen and all the court and Whizz buzzed up to the top o' the hill. They jumped on his back and was off home. But that ain't all. Whizz promised to come back once a year and take them for a visit to fairy hill, and they never saw the bog or the giant again!"

They all agreed that they liked the story, and then jumped up, eager to see their own fairy hill. Patrick was almost sure he heard Whizz buzzing near by, but instead of the Fairy Queen's aëroplane it proved to be an army plane out for exercise!

They decided to have supper at the tip-top of the hill and ate their sandwiches and drank their milk among the sweet ferns and primroses. Foggy woke up full of energy and taught Patrick how to make whistles out of birch twigs, danced an Irish break-down, sang and packed baskets, brought out his knife and cut ferns and flowers and tied them together; in short, was his usual helpful, jolly self. He was very careful to start home in time and there was no adventure on the way.

"We didn't really see any fairies, but it was a fairy hill just the same," Christine said to Victoria that night.

"Wisp was the real fairy," Victoria answered her.

XX.—The Cricket Ball Finds Them Out

The February days had been the darkest and least pleasant, but the April days were the jolliest and the sun tried to shine as brightly as in June. There were wonderful days of misty sweetness with the odor of flowers and fresh growing things everywhere.

Keith arrived for his holidays with a cold and even Victoria had to admit that he was cross. Nothing quite suited him and he even dared to tell Mrs. Mink that she was no kind of a housekeeper as she had the same pudding three times in one week. They were all impressed by this and grate ful to Keith when instead of semolina pudding a jolly trifle topped with whipped cream made an appearance the next night for dinner. Keith spent

most of his first week of vacation lounging on the grass in the garden mending a football. He would condescend to play cricket with Patrick occasionally, but on the whole he was decidedly unsociable.

"I suggested going to the Zoo again as we did at Christmas time and having tea over the monkey house. He liked the peach jam so much and that is such a jolly tea room, but he said 'Rot' when I spoke of it," Joan confided to the girls, and Victoria answered slowly, looking seriously out of the Secret Room window:

"It's the war, I think. He's worried and he wants so to go out and fight. If only he wasn't just fifteen!"

"You mean you wish that he could go, that he were old enough to go?" Beryl asked her incredulously, and she answered, "Yes." She was a soldier's daughter and had always been one. Perhaps that is why she answered so.

The class for that time was over and they had all been busy planning the next, which was not to be indoors at all, but in some enchanting, spring-filled place in the country. They had been trying to decide where they would like best to go and Nina had suggested the Rocky Valley. Wisp had nodded approval. How little they knew, the other children there in the dusky Secret Room, what the Rocky Valley had meant to their friend from Jeffers Court! They did not know and they never could know, and with all her sweetness and her love for them Wisp

did not wish that they ever should. She had run to it in sorrow and anger; she had known the shelter of its good green grass, the homely comfort of its rocks and hedges. Out of filth and noise and wrangling she had come to watch the blue hills from its height, this strange wild bit of land so near to a big city.

"I ain't deservin' o' a picnic for the next lesson. I ain't—I—"

"Am not," corrected Beryl.

"I am not a good pupil. I can only say four poems without twistin' the words, but I'm a-tryin' —I—"

Something bounced into the room, nearly hitting Christine in the nose and causing Nina to give one of her funny little shrieks.

"What on earth! Why, it's Patrick's cricket ball! Girls, it's sailed in here and they'll wonder where on earth it is. Look! There's Blighty!" Nina was carried out of her usual shyness by the episode and ran over to the open window as she spoke and the others followed her, watching Blighty, who grinned at them from a branch of the hawthorn tree which grew close to the window.

"He saw the ball and swung himself up. Come in, Blighty, as quick as you can, or you'll give away our Secret Room," said Victoria, reaching out to catch him, but he was off like a flash, giving an aggravating shriek as he went. The next moment there was a heavy swaying of the branches and

Keith swung himself to the window ledge and like Blighty sat for a moment staring in at them. Then he caught himself by throwing one leg over the window sill and jumped down into the room.

He and Patrick had been playing cricket in the garden and the ball had found out the Secret Room! Keith stood looking from one to the other of them in astonishment and Blighty, who had climbed up on his shoulder, reflected his look, and it was almost as disapproving as Keith's.

"What are you up here for, and what are you doing?" Keith asked, turning to Victoria, who smiled one of her rare smiles and going over to the table where Wisp was sitting, stood near her.

"We're having lessons for Wisp. She teaches us so many things and tells us such lovely stories and makes us love Ireland so, that we want to do something for her," she answered him.

"How long has this been going on?" her brother asked, frowning at her in a way which though it looked ferocious did not seem to alarm her in the least.

"We've had the lessons since February, but we've not been able to all be together as often as we'd like. We—"

"No, I suppose not! You've had to do it on the sly when you knew Miss Peck would be out, because you knew she would not approve of it. She and Uncle James and, as for that, mother and father would be pleased, wouldn't they, to have you have a

Cuff Street child for your best friend!" Keith stopped short after he had said this last because of a look in Victoria's eyes. He had seen the look once before when they were younger, in India, and then as now he had stopped his angry words.

While he was speaking Wisp had slipped down from off the table and had moved toward the door, standing near it, her hands folded lightly before her, looking up at him.

"Keith, you hateful old thing!" exclaimed Joan, her dark eyes snapping.

They had left the door half open when they had come up to the Secret Room and in the instant that they turned reproachfully to Keith, Wisp slipped out. It was only the briefest moment. She was hardly gone before they knew it and they were after her, all of them except Victoria, before she could have reached the last step, but she was as quick as wind, as light as air, and by the time they reached the tradesman's entrance walk she was out of sight.

When the others had left Victoria stood facing her brother. She was very still, a way she had of being when she was angry, but she was trying to keep back the words that rushed to her lips. Keith looked sheepish and uneasy, and when you read this you must not judge him too harshly. You see he did not know Wisp as the others did or as we do. He knew her, except for the carol singing Christmas Eve, only as a girl selling flowers at College Green, a child with wildly blowing, ragged, gold-red

hair. He did not know of Fairy Cottage or Auntie Moneypenny, or the star. He did not know of the class at Jeffers Court or of anything that made Wisp what she was. He had a toothache and was worried. The responsibility of his brother and sisters rested heavily on his shoulders. He had been with them just that one day when he had come to tell them the good news of Major Langsley and he had not thought so much about their escapade on the island until he was back at school again. He felt, on thinking it over, that they were not at all in good company and as he felt so much older than the rest of them and more experienced, he felt it was his duty to look after them. He was sorry as he stood there in the Secret Room with Victoria that he had spoken as he did, but he did not know how to say so, and so he was off out of the window with Blighty following him in the twinkling of an eye.

Wisp had known trouble, but she had never had anything hurt her as Keith's words had done. It was not so much what he said as the way he said it. "A Jeffers Court child"—that is what she was. There was no other word to use, and as fast as she could go she was flying back to it.

She did not stop running until she reached the green, and then she only stopped for a moment on the rustic bridge to rest. She scarcely saw the beauty of the daffodils, the scarlet joy of the tulips. Then after a second she ran on again, up Cuff Street, turn-

ing into Jeffers Court. She could not run up the stairs. She had to take them slowly until she reached the next to the last flight, but as she reached the foot of the stairs there on the second landing, something caught her eye and like a flash she was up the top flight, standing on the landing and staring in horror and bewilderment at the sight before her. There was no longer any Fairy Cottage!

Some boards lay on the floor and near them the pink and white bath mat, the blue curtain, the cooking tin, and the cushion. Some way off were the copy books of brown paper, a pencil, and a few odds and ends, but the thing which Wisp had seen from the foot of the stairs was the gold and rose gleaming of the scarf that Victoria had given her for Christmas. After a moment she stooped and picked it up, holding it close, and as she stood there with its loveliness all about her some one called up to her from the foot of the stairs. It was Mrs. Kinsale, Minnie's mother, the woman with whom she had lived from the time she was a baby until she had found her own little home high up in the roof, the home that had been torn down.

It may have been the wind which always seems to change people's voices at Jeffers Court, but it sounded almost as though Mrs. Kinsale spoke triumphantly when she said:

"They come to see about the fire escape this afternoon and they tore down them boards and left your duds on the floor. They says as how ye hadn't no

business there anyhow. Ye'd best come along down and git supper here. There ain't no other place for ye and if ye'll keep yer tongue in yer head and work for yer vittuls I'll take ye back. Mrs. Moneypenny, she went off before the men come and took down the boards. She's after goin' to her niece, who had pleurisy. They'll be a-workin' on the fire escape next week!"

After saying all this Mrs. Kinsale gave a sudden shriek and ran on down the hall toward her room, where through the open door she could see her next to the youngest baby sitting among the teacups on the untidy table, eating matches.

Wisp stood there on the upper landing, holding the soft shimmering folds of the scarf close to her. Then she leaned over and picked up a brown paper book a little larger than the others. In it were some of her own fancies that she had written out. She was down the three flights in a flash, hesitating for a moment outside the Casey abode off the court. If she had not been so blinded by her misery she would have realized that she should have left some word for her friends as to where she was going, but nothing mattered to her then except the words that Keith had said and the loss of Fairy Cottage.

There was only one thing in the world that she wanted just then and that was to lie down in the friendly shelter of the Rocky Valley and see her star.

Fortune favored in that as she came out toward

Saint Stephen's Green she saw a grocer boy whom she knew. He was driving a cart and hailed her good-naturedly, and almost before she knew it she told him that she was going toward the Rocky Valley, and he said that he had some orders off that way. One of the places where he was delivering groceries was Hawk House, and she thanked him and jumped out when they reached the gate. The grocer boy was a friend of Foggy's and had given Wisp a lift before. He may have thought her very silent that day and perhaps wondered why she had the beautiful scarf about her shoulders, but he seldom wondered about anything, and it's probable that he did not give it a thought.

After she left the grocery cart Wisp was on her own ground. She knew all the delights of the Rocky Valley and some of the heaviness of her sorrow was lightened as she felt the faint blue-gray of the sky, the far sweep of purple hills, and all along the way new budded wild roses greeting her.

She found herself sobbing, and as she walked the rugged roadway she stumbled because her tears blinded her. After a little while she turned off into a cowslip-bordered path and there in a fern-sheltered nook she lay down with her face on her arms and cried as she had never cried before.

Della Dolough sang a great deal as she went about her work on her farm. She said it kept her from being lonely and she liked the sound of her

own voice when she could not hear anything better. Della had a good many nice farm-folk friends who lived around Bray and Enniskerry and other near-by villages. She was the soul of hospitality and there was not much danger of her ever being really lonely, for her soda bread and her currant cake were the best anywhere around and so were her butter and cheese and jam and preserves. Then Della herself was like a sturdy, cheerful sunflower. People liked to sit by her freshly scrubbed hearth and enjoy the warmth of her splendid turf fire while they ate her green-gage jam and her crisp hot cakes. More than just that, as I have said, they all, from the home-sick curate who dropped in for a cup of tea and a chat in his walk across the moors, to the dairyman's youngest baby, loved Della Dolough. We know what Beryl thought of her the time she was rescued by her.

Della lived alone, but some one was visiting her most of the time. I can't say she lived alone, after all, for she had several dogs and a cat named Monarch and they would have been surprised and disgusted to have had any one say that they were not a very important part of the household.

Della and Monarch were taking a before supper walk. There was a pot of new potatoes over the fire and some slices of home-cured ham all ready to fry. Della was wishing that some one would drop in for she had made hot cakes that afternoon and she knew that they were good. She enjoyed a

walk with Monarch, he was so unexpected. One moment he would be walking majestically beside her, waving his beautiful gray-plumed tail in the air, stepping delicately over bits of fern. The next moment he would be leaping across hedges, disappearing and reappearing in a jolly, mischievous way.

She had missed him for some time and between breathing in the sweet evening air and admiring the saffron sweep of sunset, she would call:

"Monarch! Oh, Monarch! Come here, my beauty!"

When she did come across him he was sitting on the shoulder of a little girl who lay face downward on the bracken, sobbing. He was trying vainly to lick her ear and looked up with a meow of dismay and inquiry as Della came up to them. She gave him none of her attention, however, but, leaning over Wisp, lifted her up in her arms and held her so that the shock of bright hair fell across her shoulder, and carrying her gently, she walked across the way to the white gate that led to her home. In the east, shining through the rosy sunset, the star blazed joyously.

Della poured the water off the potatoes and set them in a bowl to be reheated later on. She set the table for two and brought out Monarch's best green and gold saucer so that he could feel the festivity of the occasion and have his milk close to them on the rose rag rug.

When they did have supper it was a happy meal,

but the clock struck eight before they drew up to the little table with its snowy cloth and pretty blue china, its stone jar of pink baby daisies, and its hot, good food. It was a good while before Wisp could be comforted, and before Della knew all about Fairy Cottage and the tragedy that had befallen it, and it was not until they were having supper that she knew of the children on Fitzwilliam Square. Della said to her, "Ain't it grand to have a girl sittin' here with me? Taste the jam, darlin'!"

Then Wisp told her it was the same jam they had had on Dalkey Island and as she talked she began to smile and the worst of her trouble was over.

You may be sure that Della was astonished when she connected Beryl, whom she had rescued when her wheel was broken, with the children that Wisp knew. Della was so interested and happy that she smiled all the time at her little visitor. When they had finished the meal and Wisp had dried the dishes, standing by Della as she washed them in a wooden bowl, she said to her, "You were sent here to me, and please God ye will always stay."

They were standing by the bright turf fire as she spoke, Monarch sitting in front of them gazing into the glowing flames. Wisp put her hands suddenly to her heart and looking up at her new friend, had that in her face which was the light of an answered prayer. She caught her breath in a sob.

"Shure, it can't be true, ma'am—no, it can't. The star couldn't give me anything so wonderful. It isn't

true; no, it can't be." She caught hold of the edge of Della's apron and stood looking up at her, a world of amazement in her eyes.

"It is true, for I've wanted you all my life. I've had many folks about and to stay, but you was the one I wanted to have come for good. There's all outdoors for you, and in here there's love."

It was true, but Wisp found it almost impossible to understand. Della wanted her for her very own, had thought of her since the time that Tin upset the apple tart, had come back to speak with her that afternoon when she had sold flowers on College Green. All of this was for her to know and to delight in, the dear white house, the barn, Monarch and the dogs. Della had said, "There's all outdoors for you, and in here there's love!"

Fairy Cottage had gone, but her love for it could never die. Back there, as she stood a little later at the window, were the spires of a city that she loved, and friends: Peg, Auntie Moneypenny, Foggy—and the others, the children from America and India who had been so good to her, but here at last in the warm firelight was something that was home. Della came and stood beside her, putting her arm around her and drawing her close, in the protecting way she had for anything she cared for or that needed her.

Wisp said, looking off to where the star sparkled against an orange-gray sky, "The star was thinkin' o' me all the time and bringin' me to ye."

Della answered her gravely, "It was the good Father in heaven that brought ye, child."

Wisp smiled through her grateful tears. "Maybe the star told God," she said.

XXI.—For Keith

When the girls saw that Wisp had disappeared down Fitzwilliam Square they never for one moment thought of turning back, but ran on in the direction of the green. They had no hats or jackets, but the afternoon was warm and except that people turned to look at them, it did not greatly matter. They slacked their speed after a while and walked slowly at the last, talking gravely among themselves. They were angry and unhappy and excited, and they did not know just what they would do or say when they reached Jeffers Court. They sat down on a bench in the green to talk for a moment and to rest.

"We must find Wisp first of all. She's sure to be at Fairy Cottage," said Christine.

"We'll find her and tell her we'll never, never change or give her up!" exclaimed Beryl, who now loved Wisp very much.

"Perhaps she will want to give us up," suggested Nina unexpectedly. Nina was more excited than the others over the prospect of visiting Jeffers Court, for she had never dreamed that she could ever do anything so unusual and interesting. Visions of Aunt Witheringhaugh came before her, but only added to the charm of the adventure. Nina was not as concerned as the others, for she did not know Wisp as well, but she was indignant at Keith and disappointed, for he had seemed such a nice boy, and she did think Wisp wonderful, as she did all the Fitzwilliam Square children. It was a new and enthralling life to Nina.

Victoria was the only one who had been up to Fairy Cottage, but Christine had heard so much about it that she felt as though she had been there and knew that it was three flights up.

They found the stairs very steep and were surprised at the gusts of dust that seemed blown at them from all directions and at the sobbing sound of the wind.

"Glory, what a dreadful place! I hope Fairy Cottage is an improvement on this," whispered Beryl as they reached the foot of the last flight. We know what they found when they reached the top! The remains of Wisp's beloved home on the floor and her treasures scattered about. They, like the

owner of Fairy Cottage, could only stand in amazement, staring down at the wreck.

"What be ye a-wantin' of?" came a loud voice from below, and Mrs. Kinsale creaked up the squeaky boards of the stairs and before they knew it stood looking at them with interest and curiosity.

"What be ye a-wantin' of?" she asked again, and Beryl answered her.

"We came to find Wisp—I mean Kathleen. We want to see her very much. Could you tell us, please, where we may find her?"

"I'd tell ye gladly, little miss, but I ain't an idea. She was here but a bit o' a while ago and she saw how the fire-escape men was after tearin' down the hang-out where she was after stayin'. I ain't no way o' knowin' where she went, miss. Mrs. Moneypenny, she's gone to her niece, so she ain't with her." Mrs. Kinsale was busy looking them up and down as she spoke.

Nina pulled at Beryl's sleeve. "Come away, please. I don't like her," she whispered, and they went on down the stairs without looking back, and did not stop until they reached the foot of the last flight.

"Fairy Cottage! Did you see? It's gone! Poor, poor Wisp. I know that her heart is broken!" exclaimed Christine as they came out again into the sunshine.

"It's hard luck! We might have asked that woman more about it but I didn't like her looks. You

see they must have come while Wisp was with us and taken down Fairy Cottage," Beryl said as they stood, uncertain, in the courtyard.

"It's too cruel, and after what Keith said, too. Wisp, where are you? We want so to see you!" Christine felt in her pocket for her handkerchief as she spoke, for the tears were streaming down her face.

"To-morrow will be Easter Sunday. It certainly doesn't seem like it, does it?" Joan put her arm through Christine's as she asked the question, and Christine answered, "It would seem like Easter if only we were happy about Wisp."

"There's no use in staying around here any longer now. I don't think Wisp would want us to question her friends. Let's go home and think out what is best to be done. She's all safe, of course, wherever she is. I shouldn't wonder if she went to find Auntie Moneypenny, to tell her about Fairy Cottage. She isn't lost. What we have to think about is how we can help her now that she hasn't any home." Beryl's voice trembled a little on the last words and they knew then that she was trying to cover up her sorrow for Wisp by making plans, which always she so loved to do.

The others felt that Beryl was right. Wisp probably had gone to find Auntie Moneypenny at her niece's and would have comfort from her. They went slowly back to Fitzwilliam Square, more concerned about their little friend than they had been

when they left, in spite of Keith's words. When they came near the house Victoria was waiting for them on the front steps, and when she saw them ran to meet them and learned the fate of Fairy Cottage and the fact that Wisp was not to be found at Jeffers Court. She agreed with them that the poor little owner of Fairy Cottage which now, alas, was no more, was somewhere with her friends. As they sat on the steps, all of them in the sunshine, Victoria said bitterly, "I hope she's with real friends who won't taunt her!" Then, to the amazement of all, Victoria began to cry. At the same moment Keith appeared in the open front doorway.

"I say—I— Oh, what a fuss to make over nothing! I didn't mean anything. I'm sorry I hurt the little girl's feelings." Keith grew very red as he said the last words, and if they had seen his face they would have softened toward him, but they all sat with their backs to him and no one answered him! He turned and went back into the house.

Foggy came home late from his rounds and his usual placid self was roused to frightened haste when he heard from Mrs. Kinsale of Wisp's returning to find her home demolished. He thought at once of the Fitzwilliam Square children and started out after a word of encouragement to Auntie Moneypenny, who stood in her doorway wringing her hands. She, too, had returned to find Wisp gone and her cottage under the roof only a wreck upon the floor.

Foggy's honest heart was touched and as he

walked along toward the square he was deep in thought, his head bent forward, his hands in his pockets. He did not hear his friend of the grocery wagon calling to him until he gave a funny little whistle which they had used as a sign in their newspaper selling days at the age of ten. Then he looked up, hailed his friend, and went over to the side of the wagon to talk to him.

"I was after givin' a lift to Kathleen; left her at the beginnin' o' the Rocky Valley this afternoon," said his grocery friend.

So that was what she had done. She had gone alone in her sorrow to the place she loved the best! Foggy jumped up beside his friend.

"Just you turn around and drive back up that way a bit, Bill," he commanded. Bill said he did not mind, anything for excitement, and so he turned his horse around and made for the direction from which he had come.

Foggy left the grocery cart at Hawk House just as Nina arrived at the gates, accompanied as always by Aunt Witheringhaugh's severe maid. Nina ran at once to speak with Foggy and paid no heed to the maid's formidable "Miss Nina!"

They were deep in conversation at once and Foggy's face was more solemn than when he had left Jeffers Court after Nina told him of Wisp's running away from the Secret Room after Keith had found them all there. He promised to let Nina know as soon as Wisp was found and then she could

phone them all at Fitzwilliam Square. Poor Nina was so taken out of herself that she hardly noticed the maid's reproaches as they walked up the driveway.

Foggy started off across the Rocky Valley. It was dark except for the star-shine, but he knew the ground almost as well as Wisp herself. As he walked he called her name softly and said this:

"It do be Foggy a-callin' to ye, Kathleen. Shure I'll be after buildin' a grand Fairy Cottage for ye. The Fitzwilliam Square children is after breakin' their hearts over ye!" There was no answer but the soft twitter of half sleeping birds.

Then he thought that she might be asleep, half hidden among the bracken. He made up his mind that he must borrow a lantern. A friendly light streamed from the cosy white farmhouse which he had known by sight for so long, and he went across the rough, uneven ground and knocked at the green door. It was opened at once and by some one who gave him a smiling welcome and who said, "Come in, my lad!"

It was Della. He looked past her, and there by a blazing fire, with a big gray cat cuddled in her lap, was his lost friend! She dropped Monarch and sprang toward him, and before he knew it he was sitting beside her on a high settle painted bright blue, and before him was a plate of hot supper and opposite him was Della. He told his story and they told theirs and it became more and more inter-

esting, for Della had kept Hawk House supplied with fresh milk and cream and butter and chickens and vegetables since she could remember, and she was impressed to hear that Nina, whom she regarded as a forlorn little thing, was one of the friends who had taught Wisp in the Secret Room.

They had a long talk that night, and happy-go-lucky, fun-loving Foggy showed a seriousness he had never known before. He was slow of thought and it was some time before Della could convince him that she wanted to keep his friend Kathleen with her for always.

"I thought of her a sight of times after I met her: first, the time the heavy baby she was carrying in her little arms upset my apple tart. I said to myself, 'Della Dolough, she needs you. She has the brightest face you've ever seen on any child and one thing is certain, you need her.' Then I saw her again sellin' flowers in the bitter wind, and I went back to speak to her. I'm thinkin' we mortals be stupid indeed. I spoke with her and she told me of the Rocky Valley and how she loved it. Why didn't I say to her, then, 'Come, dear, and live in it with me'? She'll never desert her friends in the tenement. Never fear that! She's talked of them to me, and you and Peg Casey and the old woman will be as welcome here as mayflowers." Della spoke earnestly and although Foggy felt a big lump in his throat at the thought of losing Wisp from Jeffers Court he was too unselfish to do more than rejoice

at the wholesome, happy life that was opening up before her. He did not then know of all the good it was going to bring into his own life and it was only for his little friend that he rejoiced.

Neither Wisp nor Foggy were familiar with the telephone and they were both interested when they found that they could speak directly with Fitzwilliam Square. Foggy called up the number and spoke to Beryl, telling her that Wisp was safe with a friend in the Rocky Valley and Beryl insisted on speaking with Wisp herself. Then when she found that Wisp was in the farmhouse of the woman who had driven her into Dublin, nothing would do but that she must speak to Della, and the upshot was that all of them, including Miss Peck, were invited out to spend Easter Monday at the farm. Della said over the phone that she would ask Nina, too, and that she was sure that Aunt Witheringhaugh would not object. Beryl accepted for all of them and sent all sorts of messages from each one of them to Wisp, who felt suddenly shy and did not want to talk through the phone.

Della did not urge Foggy to spend the night, for she knew that Wisp was anxious to have Auntie Moneypenny have news of her, but it was agreed that Foggy was to drive out on Easter Monday morning with their old friend and Peg and Tin and Dawson. For a long time Della had been a good fairy to the farmer folk and those about her with whom she came in touch. Now her goodness was

reaching farther. They were all to come out for a long day in the country Easter Monday.

Beryl told them all the news of Wisp as they sat about the library fire, all except Keith, who had not appeared at dinner. Wisp was out at the farmhouse of Della Dolough and they were all asked out for Easter Monday. Miss Peck was invited specially. Nina would be allowed to come because Aunt Witheringhaugh knew Della well. They talked eagerly among themselves, delighted at the prospect of a long day out in the Rocky Valley and at Della's farm.

Victoria was uneasy. Keith had made an apology. The others who did not know him so well could not realize what that meant to one of his proud nature. He had made an apology and they had not accepted it, had not replied to him. He had tried in his own blunt way to make amends in a measure for his hastiness of the afternoon and they had not met him halfway.

When Beryl had finished planning and talking, Miss Peck said quietly that she would be glad to go with them Monday.

"A whole day in the country will be a real treat. I cannot think of anything I should like better. I am used to the country and miss it especially in the springtime." As she spoke the girls felt sorry that they had not asked her to go on their outings before.

"I do wish we'd been chummier with her. She's

really such a dear. Wasn't she nice about Wisp and the Secret Room when we told her to-night? And there were tears in her eyes when you told about finding the remains of Fairy Cottage on the floor," Victoria said to Beryl as they sat by the fire that night.

"She knew all about where Keith was all through dinner and never said a word," said Beryl. This was true. Miss Peck had said simply, as they were leaving her for the night:

"Keith has gone down to County Meath for a week-end with his friend Marton Hayes whom he used to know at prep school. He will be going to the Faery House races Monday afternoon and will motor up to Dublin afterward."

"Pecky knows a good deal more all the time than we give her credit for. You're right, she is a dear, but do think of Pecky lost on Dalkey Island, or Pecky on Fairy Hill. It takes away all the glamour," laughed Christine.

Victoria was regretting that she had not seen her brother to say good-by before he left for County Meath; sorry with all her heart that she had not met him in kind when he had said that he was sorry.

She was thinking of him as they drove through the warm scented air toward the Rocky Valley Monday morning, but as soon as they reached the farm the joy of seeing Wisp and finding her so happy, the beauty of the day and the friendly joyousness all

about her, made her forget her gloomy thoughts entirely.

It was a holiday for Foggy, as it was Easter Monday, and he arrived in good time, bringing Auntie Moneypenny and Peg and the children with him. He looked worried. After Peg and all the others had gone off to explore the Rocky Valley, and Auntie Moneypenny had been made to drink a glass of fresh milk and was resting by the low stone doorstep, he motioned Della to one side.

"I wouldn't be after scarin' the others and maybe it ain't anything, but I'm afeard there's going to be trouble in Dublin to-day, from certain words I heard dropped this mornin'. Maybe I did wrong in bringin' them out, ma'am, but maybe 'twas only talk," he said to Della.

"That's it. That's all it was. Now don't you worry, just forget the city and enjoy yourself," Della answered him. It was easy enough to do that in the Rocky Valley, and before he knew it he was playing hide and seek or jumping in the hay as happily as any one, his cares forgotten and the magic loveliness of the day enthralling him.

They had dinner at noon and the Casey children did such ample justice to the chicken and bread sauce and the apple tart and thick, yellow cream that it did not seem as though they would ever be able to eat again. They all sat around a table placed just outside the door and all around them was the blue-gray of the mist-covered land and beyond the purple

and blue of mountains and hills and deeply shadowed valleys and near them the towers of a proud city.

"Wasn't Auntie Moneypenny simply dear at dinner? Her manners were as fine as a duchess's, weren't they?" Christine asked Victoria afterwards.

She nodded and answered, "She's real. That's the reason. Did you see how she and Pecky talked together before dinner? They seemed to hit it off so well. I don't suppose Pecky has ever seen any one just like her before."

"I don't believe she's ever seen any one like Pecky," laughed Christine.

Wisp had often felt that she was living in a dream, but never more so than that misty golden afternoon with the sun as hot as June, a sweep of wild roses everywhere over hedges, under foot, along the pathways, by the brook, and the lilacs' deep mauve sending their scent to mingle with the bracken fragrance. She was really alive on a real day. The white farmhouse was to be her home. Her friends had come to pass the whole day, to share with her this joy which as yet she could not understand. She was alone for a moment resting on the stone wall, for she was "it" at hide and seek. Suddenly she heard the brisk trot of horses' hoofs on the hard road and a red-faced farmer driving a pair of horses came into view around the bend in the road. He drew up when he saw Wisp.

"Er ye a-stayin' with Della?" he queried. She nodded, smiling in her friendly way.

"Yes, sir, maybe for always," she answered.

"Well, ye can tell Della as how she's to keep to home to-day. There's a deal of trouble in the city, shootin' and fightin', why, it's goin' to be a revolution! Folks ain't a-goin' to have no picnic gittin' home from the races. My nephew phoned me from the city, but I ain't been able to get a connection since. I'm a-goin' down to bring my daughter home!"

While he was speaking Wisp had been doing some rapid thinking. Keith was coming back into the city, into a revolution, coming from the Faery House races. Keith could not find help from any of his own kind. It was she, a child of the people, who could help him, some one who was able to understand something of the emotion that was causing this wild outbreak. For Wisp, Ireland was a fairy thing; she loved it entirely, but she loved it with the peace of flowers and sunsets and dreams, not with anything else. She and the children had lived in their own fancies, as much away from the thought of war as they could, and now war had come to their very door and they must face it.

"Could ye give me a pencil and a bit o' paper?" she asked the farmer, and when he handed the desired objects to her she wrote this note:

DEAR DELLA:

Please don't be scared. There is fightin' in Dublin. I won't be hurt, not a bit. Don't let any o' 'em git home,

't ain't safe. I'm going for Master Keith. We'll be back to-night. I love ye.

WISP.

"Would ye be so good as to take me a bit o' the way, sir? I've an errand down that way," she asked the farmer, and he assented good-naturedly. She ran to the doorstep and leaning over Auntie Money-penny, who was dozing, she put the note in her lap. Della was showing Miss Peck her dairy at the other side of the house.

The farmer's horse went at a good pace and they were on the outskirts of the city before they knew it. Wisp asked to be put down as the farmer said he wanted to turn off a side road, and after thanking him she ran swiftly along the Stillorgan Road, so swiftly that she was almost out of sight before the farmer had stopped looking after her.

"She kin git along! She'll be after havin' friends along the end o' the road maybe," he thought, little dreaming that she was bound straight for the heart of Dublin, a city now in the midst of wild fighting.

It was only a little way into the city and she could run like a young deer. As she ran she tried to plan what was best to do and to keep fear of not finding Keith out of her thoughts. She made up her mind that it might be best to go to Fitzwilliam Square first of all, but as she came farther into the city she made another plan. The farmer had spoken of heavy fighting in the green which had begun a-

once with the starting of the revolution. Saint Stephen's Green, her green, beloved of the ducks and flowers—she had almost grown up in the green and she could not believe that evil could come near it.

As she came down Baggot Street a confusion of sound greeted her, shouting and firing, and a woman called to her from a window to go back. She did stand still for a moment trying to think what was best to do. Her great wish was to find Keith. She did not know how, but she felt that she could help him. Her next wish was to return as quickly as she could to the Rocky Valley so that her friends there would not have long to worry about her. She ran quickly on toward the green. Twice she stopped and it seemed as though she could not go any farther, for she heard the sharp sound of rifles and once or twice she saw something fly past her. No one would have harmed her if they knew she was running along there opposite the green, but in being out on the streets in the most dangerous part of Dublin that day, she was liable to be hit by a stray bullet just as any soldier might be.

She started to turn down Dawson Street, thinking to get that way to College Green where she could see the motors coming from the races, the motors that the farmer said were being stopped, but soldiers were coming up that way and she ran on to the end of the street, and as she reached the corner she saw that there was a holdup of cars and as she looked her heart seemed to leap right up into her mouth,

for standing up in his friend's car in his familiar brown tweed suit and cap stood Keith!

"Thank ye, Star, for sendin' me this way," thought Wisp as she ran across the street toward the car.

XXII.—Irish Spring

Keith was talking angrily with some Sinn Fein soldiers.

"I tell you I won't get out and I won't go into the green. You have no right to stop me. Clear out and let me get by!" Keith was so angry that he could hardly speak and he did not even see Wisp as she flew up to them.

A soldier pointed a revolver at Keith. He did not intend to shoot him, but he wanted him to understand that he must come with them as prisoner to the green!

What happened next always seemed like a dream to Wisp and to Keith as well. Wisp seemed to appear in their midst all of a sudden as though she had dropped out of the sky. As usual she wore no hat and her hair flew wildly about her dusty, eager

little face. Della had not had time to make her any clothes and she wore the same drab frock and the jacket flapping away from its one button. She was breathing quickly after her wild run.

"What be ye a-thinkin' of? Can't ye see he ain't anything but a friend? Ain't I after comin' for him to take him out to Della Dolough's farm to see his brother and sisters? He's my friend and his sisters is friends o' mine and o' others at Jeffers Court."

"He may get to Portobello Barracks and make trouble. He's got to come to the green as our prisoner," one of the men answered her, and she looked at him keenly as he spoke.

"Ain't ye Tod Gaffery what has been friend to Foggy Moyne? Shure, I know ye well and Foggy's me best friend. Can't ye believe me when I tell ye straight that he's our friend, too?" She jumped up on the running board of the car and stood there facing them, smiling fearlessly at them. She seemed suddenly to hold the whole situation in her hands, and as she smiled at them they smiled back. There was no mistaking the honesty of her words. Whoever the boy might be, the little girl was one of their own people, speaking their own way. The man called Gaffery, who had been a friend to Foggy and who seemed to be in command, turned to the other soldiers.

"Let the car with the boy and the girl go through," he said.

Wisp was over the side of the car, sitting next

Keith in a twinkling and they were off toward the Stillorgan Road before one could say "Jack Robinson," off like the wind, and they did not slow up until they were well along toward the Rocky Valley. Then Keith stopped the car and held out his hand to Wisp.

"I want to say first that I'm sorry before I thank you. It's not that I'm just sorry now—I have been right along ever since Saturday. I told the girls so. Now I want to thank you for perhaps saving my life. Do you understand, Wisp—this is a revolution?"

Wisp shook her head. Her dusty little face was white and sudden tears came to her eyes.

"No, I can't be after thinkin' it can be. I want for Ireland to be just happy. I ain't thought about things that way. Children don't."

Keith told her as they went on of how he had heard rumors on his way in from the races and had thought only of getting through so that he could go on to the Rocky Valley for his sisters and the others.

They were all down by the stone wall, except Auntie Moneypenny, when Keith drove the motor up to them. The rest of the evening was a mixture of gratitude and joy and excitement and fear, for news of the growing revolution came from people driving through who had come from the city. The telephone wires were cut and there was no chance of any one going back to the city that night.

There is much more than just the next two weeks that I want to tell you about. But I know you will want to hear first that Miss Peck and the others except Beryl stayed at Hawk House with Aunt Witheringhaugh and Nina during the two weeks of the revolution, and that Beryl stayed at the farm which she so loved with Della and Foggy and Wisp and Auntie Moneypenny and Peg and the children. There was room for them all. It was a happy time in spite of the trouble so near them, for when people who love each other are together out in the sunshine, it is easy to be happy. There were sad times, too, and times of fear when they saw the flames of burning buildings leaping against the sky from the city they loved, but finally the sad time went by and the last evening came. The girls and Patrick and Keith were to go with Miss Peck to England where Keith was to go back to school and the others to visit Uncle James until midsummer, when they would all come again.

Auntie Moneypenny was anxious to go back to her own little room and her own possessions, but she promised to come out for week-ends as did Foggy and the others. There would always be room for them and a welcome at Della's.

As for Wisp, there would be times in spite of "all outdoors and love in the house" when she would miss her Fairy Cottage with a deep pang at her heart, but she was so grateful and happy that the times would grow fewer and farther apart. She

was in an ecstasy of living, out in the Rocky Valley, and although the last evening had come and she would not see her friends until July, she could wish them good-by with a light heart, knowing that they would surely come back and that all of them were her friends, Keith as much as the others.

They all sat out on the stone fence watching the sunset that last night when Christine said to Wisp, "Tell us some last thing about Ireland."

And Wisp answered, "I don't twist me words as much as I did, but this won't sound just right. It's a bit of a verse I made up. If ye like it each one can learn to say it and it can be a kind o' bond o' friendship between us. Me heart's fair burstin' with joy for all the good that's come me way, the lessons in the Secret Room and ye all so kind a-helpin' o' me and us all bein' friends—and the Rocky Valley and Della. I thank the star every night. It knows I've moved from Fairy Cottage. It brought me here! I'll say this poem to yez. I was after makin' it up the night Tin had the croup." She leaned over to pat Monarch and then she said the poem:

IRISH SPRING

'Tis fairy time in Ireland in the spring
With the golden hush o' star-shine on the hill,
  Gleamin' veils o' silver dew,
  Shadows soft and blue,
'Tis wonder time in Ireland in the spring.

My heart flies far to Ireland in the Spring,
With the silence of its secrets still untold.
Flowering may, rose, pink and white,
Fairies dancing in the night,
It is magic time in Ireland in the Spring.

'Tis dreamin' time in Ireland in the spring
With the field o' cowslips gleamin' in the sun,
And the tender fragile sheen
O' the softest palest green
O' the leaves that bud in Ireland in the spring.

God keep Ireland safe through all the spring,
'Tis her holy time o' all the year,
Violets blue and primrose pale,
Columbine and lilies frail
Breathe peace and love to Ireland in the spring.

CENTRAL CIRCULATION
CHILDREN'S ROOM

WISP

A GIRL OF DUBLIN

by

KATHARINE ADAMS

Author of "Mehitable," "Midsummer," etc.

Illustrated by Jay van Everen

Wisp is the story of a little Dublin girl of fourteen. She lives in a dingy tenement called Jeffers Court, and has many friends there. Although she has no parents or money and no one to care for her, she makes a beautiful world of her own out of the things she imagines. Her vivid love of beauty, of the fairies, and of all that gives to life a touch of something beyond its seeming mundane every dayness, helps her to find happiness for herself and others.

She makes friends with some children from America and their cousins from India who come to live in a big, gloomy old house on Fitzwilliam Square in Dublin. The story is about their acquaintance and their adventures and how through Wisp they come to feel for themselves the charm of Ireland. They live through very exciting times, and towards the last of the story, Keith, the cousin from Eaton, who did not at first want Wisp for a friend, comes to find what a splendid one she can be.

Katharine Adams is a new writer in the field of fiction for girls. "Mehitable," with its Paris background, and "Midsummer" with its Swedish setting, have had comments of unusual enthusiasm from librarians, critics, and the general public. Lenore St. John Power called "Midsummer" "an unusually good story," in her children's Book Shelf. Miss Adams lived in Dublin for many years while her father was American consul there and she gives a picture of the city, seen through the eyes of these interesting young people, that girls of 12 to 14 will enjoy.

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